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A NEW COMPANION TO

RENAISSANCE
DRAMA

EDITED BY

ARTHUR F. KINNEY

AND

THOMAS WARREN HOPPER

WILEY Blackwell

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In memory of Normand Berlin, and in honor of Tony Burton and R. Malcolm Smuts
A.F.K.

In honor of Ed, Ruth, and Kayla
T.W.H.

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	x
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xviii
Introduction	1
<i>Arthur F. Kinney and Thomas Warren Hopper</i>	
Part I Context	9
1 The Politics of Renaissance England	11
<i>Norman Jones</i>	
2 Continental Influences	21
<i>Lawrence F. Rbu</i>	
3 Medieval and Reformation Roots	35
<i>Raphael Falco</i>	
4 Popular Culture and the Early Modern Stage	51
<i>Sophie Chiari and François Laroque</i>	
5 Multiculturalism and Early Modern Drama	65
<i>Scott Oldenburg</i>	
6 London and Westminster	75
<i>Ian W. Archer</i>	
7 Travel and Trade	88
<i>William H. Sherman</i>	
8 The Theater and the Early Modern Culture of Debt	98
<i>Amanda Bailey</i>	
9 Vagrancy	112
<i>William C. Carroll</i>	

10	Domestic Life <i>Martin Ingram</i>	125
11	Religious Persuasions, c.1580–c.1620 <i>Lori Anne Ferrell</i>	143
12	Science, Natural Philosophy, and New Philosophy in Early Modern England <i>Barbara H. Traister</i>	154
13	Magic and Witchcraft <i>Deborah Willis</i>	170
14	Antitheatricity: The Theater as Scourge <i>Leah S. Marcus</i>	182
Part II Theater History		193
15	Performance: Audiences, Actors, Stage Business <i>S. P. Cerasano</i>	195
16	Playhouses <i>David Kathman</i>	211
17	Theatrical License and Censorship <i>Richard Dutton</i>	225
18	Playing Companies and Repertory <i>Roslyn L. Knutson</i>	239
19	Rehearsal and Acting Practice <i>Don Weingust</i>	250
20	Boy Companies and Private Theaters <i>Michael Shapiro</i>	268
21	Women's Involvement in Theatrical Production <i>Natasha Korda</i>	282
22	"To travayle amongst our frendes": Touring <i>Peter H. Greenfield</i>	296
23	Progresses and Court Entertainments <i>R. Malcolm Smuts</i>	309
24	"What revels are in hand?" Performances in the Great Households <i>Suzanne Westfall</i>	322
25	Civic Drama <i>Lawrence Manley</i>	337
Part III Genres		355
26	Masque <i>David Lindley</i>	357

27	The History Play: Shakespeare and Beyond <i>Brian Walsh</i>	371
28	Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage <i>Lena Cowen Orlin</i>	388
29	Revenge Tragedy <i>Marissa Greenberg</i>	403
30	Romance and Tragicomedy <i>Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Cyrus Mulready</i>	417
Part IV Critical Approaches		441
31	Sexuality and Queerness on the Early Modern Stage <i>Valerie Billing</i>	443
32	Gendering the Stage <i>Alison Findlay</i>	456
33	Race and Early Modern Drama <i>Mary Floyd-Wilson</i>	474
34	Staging Disability in Renaissance Drama <i>David Houston Wood</i>	487
35	Space and Place <i>Adam Zucker</i>	501
36	The Matter of Wit and the Early Modern Stage <i>Ian Munro</i>	513
37	Materialisms <i>Elizabeth Williamson</i>	529
Part V Playwrights, Publishers, and Textual Studies		543
38	The Transmission of an English Renaissance Play-Text <i>Grace Ioppolo</i>	545
39	Publishers of Drama <i>Tara L. Lyons</i>	560
40	Sidney, Cary, Cavendish: Playwrights of the Printed Page and a Future Stage <i>Lara Dodds and Margaret Ferguson</i>	576
41	Nonprofessional Playwrights <i>Matteo Pangallo</i>	598
	<i>Index</i>	612

List of Illustrations

9.1	Thomas Harman, <i>A caueat or warening for commen cursetors</i> (1567/8)	116
10.1	Hans Holbein the Younger, <i>Sir Thomas More and His Family</i> (1527)	126
10.2	Cornelius Johnson, <i>The Capel Family</i> (c.1640)	126
10.3	Male and female roles: hunting and spinning	129
10.4	A family meal	130
10.5	A wife beats her husband with a bunch of keys; a “riding” occurs in the background. From <i>English Customs</i> (1628)	136
10.6	The world turned upside down. From <i>English Customs</i> (1628)	137
15.1	Richard Tarlton, from a drawing by John Scottowe (1588?)	206
16.1	Johannes de Witt, illustration of the Swan Theater interior	217
35.1	“The Comic Scene,” from Sebastian Serlio, <i>The First Book of Architecture</i> (1611)	506
38.1	A page from Henry Glapthorne’s autograph manuscript of <i>The Lady Mother</i> (BL Egerton MS 1994)	548

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Introduction

Arthur F. Kinney and Thomas Warren Hopper

On January 30, 1649, Charles I, condemned two days earlier “to be putt to death by the severinge of his head from his body ... In the open Streete before Whitehall,” was wakened before dawn. He asked Thomas Hacker, his Groom of the Bedchamber, to trim his beard “more than ordinary, by reason the season is so sharpe as probably may make me shake, which some observers will imagine proceeds from fear. I would have no such imputation.” He placed in his pocket a clean handkerchief and an orange spiked with cloves to refresh him. About 10 a.m. he joined Colonel Hacker to make the short journey to Whitehall. As they went, Charles checked the time and handed the clock to Hacker as a memorial. At Whitehall, they went to the King’s bedchamber, “where he used to lye,” to await their final appearance. At first refusing to eat after taking the sacrament, the King requested half a loaf of manchet and a glass of claret wine “in case some fitt of fainting might take him upon the scaffold.” Being allied with the Presbyterians, he declined an offer of prayer from Puritan ministers. Then the call came. Proceeding as he had regularly done to see Court entertainments, Charles and Hacker passed through the privy gallery and through the banqueting hall, where a hole had been struck in the wall allowing the King to step out onto the public scaffold.

This historic moment, culminating three years of debates and treatises decreasing royal authority, now seemed inevitable. Key army documents over a three-year period largely written by Henry Ireton, the Commissary General, had charted the decline. The Heads of the Proposals (August 1647) restructured Parliament. The Remonstrance of the Army (November 1648) argued for a monarch as figurehead voted by the people, but disenfranchised of veto power. The Levellers raised the objection that the King had abused his powers by asserting rights that denied the right of liberty to his people and should be brought to trial for treason. Finally, the Agreement of the People (January 1649) eliminated both the monarch and the House of Lords, creating a new system based solely on a unicameral legislative body which appointed the executive branch reporting to it. These documents were approved by the Levellers and by the

New Model Army which, since 1644, had called themselves Saints, appointed by God and thereby providential in their activities.

The self-styled Saints employed biblical language to impugn Charles I and to remove divine associations with the Crown. They called him this “man of blood,” which refers to 2 Samuel 16:7, in which King David is cursed as a “bloody man” for spilling innocent blood. As Crawford (1977) explains, this association of Charles with the “blood guilt” of murdering innocents indicted him according to long-standing cultural practices stemming from both the Bible and Anglo-Saxon laws. After years of Charles holding off opposing forces by dividing their loyalties, his attempt to invade Scotland with Scottish support was the last straw. His trial was short and the execution hard upon.

Charles I and Colonel Hacker stepped onto the makeshift platform between Whitehall and the broad London street. While a small group of men gathered around to hear him, a vast crowd jostled for position behind a ring of protective cavalry. These spectators thronged everywhere – on the ground, before a chest-high railing draped with black cloth, and from rooftops of neighboring buildings. The executioner and his assistant came on the platform disguised in black robes and wearing masks, wigs, and false beards. With the full attention on him, Charles remained standing to make a speech. He affirmed his innocence, excused Parliament, and blamed the army for his death. Given the increasing charges against him, it was his last chance, with a scribe in the audience taking notes, to rewrite history. He emphasized the “liberty” and “freedom” of his people and spoke of “having a government [with] laws by which their life and their goods may be most their own,” adding, “If I would have given way to an arbitrary way, for to have all laws changed according to the power of the sword I needed not to have come here. And, therefore, I tell you, and I pray God to be not laid to your charge, that I am the martyr of the people.” Then he removed his cloak. He removed his St. George medal, his most precious jewel, and gave it and his gloves to Bishop Juxton saying, “Remember.”

A few days later, similar remarks were published in his *Eikon Basilike*, compiled from his notes by the clergyman John Gauden, which would go through forty editions in English by the end of that year:

The odium and offences which som men's rigor or remisness in Church and State had contracted upon My Government, I resolved to have expiated by such Laws and regulations for the future, as might not onely rectified what was amiss in practice, but supplie what was defective in the constitution. No man haveing a greater zeal to see Religion settled, and preserved in Truth, Unitie, and Order then Myself, whom it most concern's both in Pietie, and Policie, knowing, that, No flames of civil dissections are more dangerous then those which make religious pretensions the grounds.

Then he put his head on the block as the axe rose. The King asked the executioner to pause until he signaled with outstretched hands. The axe struck with a single blow. The head was held aloft and soldiers dispersed the crowd. But, noted Sir Roger Manley,

They were inhumanely barbarous to his dead corpse. His hair and his blood were sold by parcels. Their hands and sticks were tinged by his blood and the block, now cut into chips, as also the sand sprinkled with his sacred gore, were exposed for sale. Which were greedily bought, but for different ends, by some as trophies of their slain enemy, and by others as precious reliques of their beloved Prince. (qtd. in Fumerton 1991, 9)

The execution of Charles I was a conscious performance that shared many elements with early modern theater, such as costumes, properties, speeches. The performance was enacted upon a temporary, public stage, with Whitehall functioning as a backdrop. The execution made characters of Charles, his escort, the bishop, and the headsman, all in costume and some wearing masks. They employed such properties as the clove-spiked orange, the Eucharist host, the St. George medal, the axe. Speeches were delivered customary to both staged and real executions (Martin 2009). The performers acted upon cues, for how else might one read Charles's gesturing with his outstretched hands? These events were recorded, illustrated, and spread (see Fumerton 1991, 15 passim). Alongside five-act comedies, tragedies, and histories, alongside Court masques and entertainments, alongside pageants and royal progresses and Lord Mayor's shows, the execution of Charles I is yet another presentation of Renaissance English theater.

Since the publication of the first *Companion to Renaissance Drama* in 2004, the landscape of early modern scholarship has changed. This volume reflects those changes for scholars, students, and general readers. The rise of essay collections dedicated to the major authors of the period, some of which are now receiving second editions, has lessened the need for author-centric chapters. We have repurposed that space for more recent critical perspectives that indicate the primacy of literary theory in the field. Returning contributors have updated their chapters to incorporate new research, and new contributors add their established voices to a rich conversation. All essays survey their field before adding new ideas and suggesting future directions for study, which the editors hope actively to advance. In some ways, the chapter titles suggest a limited focus that belies the interrelatedness of many topics. Some particularly wide-ranging subjects, such as women in drama, are discussed in more than one essay. Readers will find the index useful in tracing these cross-references. As diverse and nuanced as those conversations are, this volume cannot encompass them all; readers interested in reading deeper should consult the references at the end of each essay. *A New Companion to Renaissance Drama*, then, acts both as an index of current conversations within Renaissance drama and a predictor of their evolution.

Part I situates Renaissance drama within its political, economic, religious, social, intellectual, geographic, and historical contexts. Norman Jones details the major historical events of the Elizabethan and Stuart periods that serve as a backdrop for the drama. The next two chapters examine two convergent influences upon Renaissance drama. On the one hand, Lawrence F. Rhu traces the effects that Continental thought, particularly the Reformation and humanistic studies, had on English culture, and how drama expressed those changes despite initial resistance to, and ambivalence about, accepting such elements of Continental culture. In the face of that Continental influence, Raphael Falco, on the other hand, looks at the debt that Renaissance drama owed to its medieval counterpart, and the ways that early modern dramatists adapted medieval dramatic conventions.

Writing about the popular culture that shaped such consumption, Sophie Chiari and François Laroque work to break down the supposed barrier that existed between learned and folk cultures. Scott Oldenburg provides context about the immigrant communities that formed in London after the Reformation, and the ways that the stage mediated anti-alien sentiment against multiculturalism. Ian Archer, writing about the cultural center of London and neighboring Westminster, stresses the nuance to be found in the stage's portrayal of a social reality in flux caused by a rise in wealth, trade, and social mobility. William H. Sherman writes about the drama's role in portraying travel and trade. The theater proved ideal for condensing the world into a small space and time, and by alluding to actual events and staging foreign peoples and

customs, it shaped audiences' reactions to them. A rise in trade leads to a rise in wealth, risk, and debt; thus Amanda Bailey's essay, on Tudor and Stuart economics, argues how the staging of a culture of debt allowed drama to negotiate emerging moral and ethical problems in early modern society. One such problem, vagrancy, is the subject of William C. Carroll's chapter. Carroll argues how vagrants' association with both disorder and the theaters was exaggerated in the period, and how the tension between the historical and literary accounts of vagrancy has shaped scholarship, which has only recently been embracing a more nuanced view of the topic.

Often at stake in those staged problems of debt and vagrancy was the status of the early modern household, which, as Martin Ingram details, served as the basic economic and social unit of the period. By staging domestic life, Renaissance drama, especially domestic tragedy, participated in changing the cultural attitudes about courtship, partnership, and household business, and Ingram further calls upon historians to take more seriously into account the dramatic representations of family life.

The next three essays of Part I summarize the broad metaphysical modes of thought, inquiry, and skepticism during the period: religion, science, and magic. Lori Anne Ferrell encapsulates the religious instability and paradox of the period 1580–1620, and the historiography of its scholarship, as it was expressed through religious tracts, prayer books, vernacular Bibles, and sermons. Against this state of religious turbulence, Barbara Traister explores the motivations and means behind various kinds of natural inquiry in the period, from astronomy to mathematics, from chemistry to medicine, as evidenced in close readings of drama. Just as inquiry into nature could be seen as an act of further discovering divinity through its works, so could that inquiry be seen as an arcane, even demonic transgression against natural laws. Deborah Willis explores this further with an overview of the early modern understanding of witchcraft and magic. The figures of the witch and the magician held an uncanny fascination for early modern culture, and continue to do so now.

Part I ends on a contrapuntal note, with a discussion of antitheatricality by Leah S. Marcus. Renaissance criticism of the theater depended upon its very existence, and theater critics paradoxically acknowledged its power over audiences. Their voice was a necessary counterargument to the theater's supporters that helped define the social place and function of theater, a fact that future scholarship must take as its starting point.

Part II, Theater History, seeks to recover the various physical, commercial, legal, and social conventions surrounding the production and consumption of Renaissance drama. The essays within the section have a high degree of intertextuality, and speak alongside one another in natural ways. S. P. Cerasano foregrounds Part II by defining the historical concepts of performances, playing spaces, and rehearsal practices writ large. David Kathman revises Herbert Berry's chapter from the earlier *Companion* to describe developments in playhouse design, from the adaptation of inns to outdoor public theaters, and to indoor private ones, taking into account evidence from archives, city records, and archaeological digs between 1989 and 2016. Richard Dutton outlines the pressures that playwrights and playing companies faced from the licensing and censorship of their work.

With the physical legacy and legal history of Renaissance theater established, Part II turns to the practices of repertory and rehearsal that are recoverable from period evidence and modern experimentation. From the legal records of the Master of Revels, among others, Roslyn L. Knutson constructs the repertory practices of early modern playing companies. The rise, fall, and convergence of actors, playwrights, patrons, censors, and theater owners speak to the evolving tastes of early modern audiences within the complex networks outlined in Part I. The original

practices of early modern actors are another matter entirely, one that Don Weingust seeks to recover with as little speculation as possible in his essay on acting practices. Speaking to both Kathman and Knutson, Weingust hypothesizes that early modern theater troupes, working within a repertory schedule in an established space, would have had precious little time for the luxuries afforded “late modern” actors, especially rehearsal time for cues, blocking, and choreography. Weingust cautions that the difference between early and late modern acting practices further prevents Renaissance dramatists from being considered our full contemporaries.

With this in mind, the next two essays further analyze how the conditions of performance shaped early modern drama. One popular playing condition that waned in the face of Puritanism was the boy companies, which is the subject of Michael Shapiro’s essay. Rising from Court performances by grammar school choristers, boy companies unevenly enjoyed royal patronage during the decades before the ban and, in performing works by the major playwrights of the era (except Shakespeare), helped usher the shift to indoor, private theaters. While many of the boy companies’ performances were satiric, in part because the audience was aware that boys were personating women onstage, women themselves were not allowed to perform. As Natasha Korda reminds us, this does not mean that women were not extensively involved in theatrical production. After historiographically orienting her argument, and noting that women are as absent in the historiography as early theater historians assumed they were in the world of Renaissance drama, Korda delves through the evidence to argue that the all-male English stage was itself an anomaly, and that women participated as patrons, authors, actresses in Court masques, and costumers, in addition to working in the box office and hawking concessions.

The final four essays of Part II discuss the performances for elite audiences and the nuanced ways in which drama was used to negotiate power relations within and without the Court. Peter H. Greenfield, writing about traveling companies, elaborates upon the advantages that traveling afforded to both the companies’ purses and their patrons’ reputations, and the constraints it imposed. Adaptation – to spaces, of material, to local customs – defined the playing companies’ experience, but the rewards from traveling outweighed the risks until the rise of Puritanism in the seventeenth century caused a decline in traveling that culminated in the 1642 ban. R. Malcolm Smuts advocates for an interdisciplinary approach by drawing upon the histories of dance, the theater, and the book as a supplement to the historical context when studying Court masques and royal progress entertainments. Suzanne Westfall, writing of performances in the great households, speaks to Korda and Greenfield from the perspective of the patrons, who were often women, and who would often write and act in the entertainments they and their household produced. These types of performances spoke to the patrons’ urge to display their connections, taste, and power. Lawrence Manley concludes the section by discussing how London city officials borrowed from the Court performances to reframe public life as a spectacle, as seen positively in the Lord Mayor’s shows and the 1559 coronation entry of Queen Elizabeth, and negatively in the lack of pageantry under Charles I.

Part III analyzes drama by genre, as defined in both today’s terms and those of the period. David Lindley, writing about masques, echoes and offers an example of Smuts’s call for an interdisciplinary approach as he discusses the genre’s evolution from earlier social rituals and festivals to its epitome under the Stuarts and its dissolution at the outbreak of the civil wars. Brian Walsh, writing about the history play, negotiates the contested definition of the genre in its four-hundred years of history, arguing instead that any play is a history play that imaginatively engages with, and also reflexively shapes, the shared “historical culture” of a time period. Opposite the history play’s dealings with the past stands the domestic tragedy’s probing of the

present, as catalyzed by the trial of Anne Suttill and the staging of *Arden of Faversham*. Lena Cowen Orlin contends that domestic tragedy, a term coined in 1831 for plays sharing a thematic kinship that have been seriously studied only since 1924, stages contested the power relations of domestic life within households, between households, and between households and the state, of which the household was considered an analogue. While Alice Arden's murder of her husband moved audiences beyond mere titillation, another genre, revenge tragedy, used murder and revenge as vehicles to explore the cyclical motion of lawlessness, social contamination, and punishment. Marissa Greenberg close reads several revenge tragedies to argue that the predictable, cyclical nature of the genre allows audiences to gratify violent urges from a removed place that may not be as distant as might be imagined. Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Cyrus Mulready continue reading this cyclical movement as they discuss two other genres with varied and contingent definitions: romance and tragicomedy. Degenhardt and Mulready point out that the two genres have been conflated only recently, and, by tracing the critical conversation surrounding them, hope to separate them in order to reveal the genres' diverse engagements.

Critical Approaches, Part IV, presents a range of viewpoints grounded in contemporary literary theory. Twenty years removed from the "corporeal turn," the prominence of performance studies surrounding sexuality, gender, race, and disability cannot be denied. Part IV opens with Valerie Billing, who offers valuable lessons from queer theory about sexuality, desire, and same-sex relationships. Billing traces the historiography of queer theory, which stems from Foucault and new historicism; performs close reading to illustrate the instability of gender norms that performance illustrates; and ends by describing a recent movement within queer studies, that of unhistoricism. Unhistoricizing sex means to read early modern sexuality on its own terms, rather than as a precursor to modern concepts of desire. Reading against the dominant narrative spun by Foucault frees scholars from the need for slavish historical accuracy and opens up broader interpretations. As an example of such an interpretation, Alison Findlay closely reads a variety of drama to show how playwrights and performers, especially boy players and women actors, deconstructed essentialist gender norms by calling attention to the arbitrariness of everyday gendered performance. This can be read in conjunction with Shapiro, Korda, and (in Part V) Dodds and Ferguson.

Mary Floyd-Wilson and David Houston Wood provide overviews of two other historically contingent critical fields that constitute selfhood, race and disability, respectively. Floyd-Wilson covers the exhaustive amount of early modern etiologies of and responses to race, both of which often overlap with concepts of religion, heredity, and beauty, among others. Floyd-Wilson's close readings show how drama reified and/or complicated those cultural assumptions. Wood treads well beyond the usual wake of Richard III's twisted steps; the sheer variety of plays he interprets argues strongly for the ubiquity of deformity writ large on the early modern stage. By approaching early modern disability on its own terms, Wood unpacks the cultural forces that defined impairment of all types. Ultimately, these four essays offer new and different ways of accessing early modern difference and selfhood through the drama.

The final three essays of Part IV mark the "material turn," that is, emerging critical perspectives on how humans shape, reshape, and are shaped by physical space and objects. Adam Zucker's reading of space and place illustrates how the drama's use of material space to portray imagined spaces responds to the real-world relationship between people and the spaces, particularly urban ones, through which they move their persons and their capital, both physical and intellectual. Ian Munro reads wit as one such kind of intellectual capital that can be exchanged within mutable

“fields,” that is, physical spaces, rhetorical settings, and social groups. Wit also constitutes the matter of drama itself insofar as characters use speech and rhetoric to frame their actions for the benefit of other characters and the audience. Elizabeth Williamson reflects upon the rise of materialist criticism and its uses for scholars. Cultural materialism seeks to reconstruct early modern culture from its material artifacts, on its own terms, from its own perspectives. Rather than making an objective study of material culture, as found in scientific materialism, cultural materialism embraces subjectivity by distancing itself from modern concepts of individuality, ownership, and thought. This perspective offers a re-visioning of book history, global trade, religion, cognition, nature, and performance.

One aspect of cultural materialism, the rise of the history of the book and manuscript studies, is the concern of Part V, Playwrights, Publishers, and Textual Studies, which explores the textual history of writing, recording, and transmitting drama and entertainments. Grace Ioppolo describes the insights to be gained from recovering the circuitous route that a play-text would follow from manuscript to stage to print. Focusing on one aspect of this path, Tara L. Lyons provides a brief introduction to the publishers of drama active between 1580 and 1640. Case studies of the most prolific publishers, supported by data from court records, guild registers, and wills, paints a picture of a vibrant, diverse, and complex network that still has much to offer scholars.

The final two essays of the volume each read one subset of authors against the world described by Ioppolo and Lyons. Lara Dodds and Margaret Ferguson read the life and work of three early modern female playwrights – Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish – to unpack the constraints they faced as educated, elite women authors writing drama to investigate the nature of good rulers and to resist being made political subjects. Dodds and Ferguson resist labeling the work of these women as “closet drama,” and, alongside Korda, call for more inquiry into the participation of women in Renaissance drama. Matteo Pangallo writes about nonprofessional playwrights, often working-class playgoers with no professional experience who still sought to participate in dramatic production. From their work, Pangallo argues, we can learn about how the art form was experienced and perceived against the tastes, desires, and ideals of some of its consumers.

We offer this *New Companion* as an expanded call for more and varied engagement with the drama, along any and all of the interpretive avenues presented in this volume, and of the criticism yet to arise. The trends of the past decade’s scholarship teach us to understand the period on its own terms; to embrace nuanced interpretations; to read negotiation of identity and beliefs against dominant ideologies; to discover the networks connecting authors and actors, patrons and performers, audience and reader, rulers and vagrants alike. The power of drama remains potent centuries later, as evidenced by the exciting scholarship presented in, and perhaps presaged by, this *New Companion*.

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Part I
Context

The Politics of Renaissance England

Norman Jones

The English Renaissance took place against a political backdrop dominated by international conflict, dynastic questions, religious tension, and economic confusion. These leitmotifs were modulated by the political styles and personal quirks of Elizabeth I and James I, and their favorites. Elizabeth refused to talk about the succession to the throne, squashed attempts to go beyond the religious settlement of 1559, and, very reluctantly, led England into a world war with Spain, putatively in defense of Protestantism. James, through adroit politics, peacefully settled the succession and took the throne of England, uniting it with Scotland through his person. He made peace with Spain, to the horror of his Protestant subjects, and tried to avoid the pitfalls of ideological warfare, despite Catholic attempts to kill him. He, too, however, was drawn into Continental conflicts in defense of Protestantism. The decisions of both monarchs stressed the economy, but probably encouraged its evolution in ways that launched British capitalism and imperialism.

By 1584 it was clear Elizabeth I would never marry. The political classes, faced with this certainty, began a new political dance around their newly designated Virgin Queen, playing the charade of eternal desirability in the face of advancing age. The Queen was presiding over a Court that was increasingly filled with a younger generation whose understanding of politics, and relation to the Queen, differed from their parents'. Many of the leading political figures of Elizabeth's early reign died in the 1580s. Most importantly, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester and perhaps the one love of Elizabeth's life, died in 1588. Increasingly, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, presided over a Privy Council full of younger faces. He was grooming his son Robert to take his place as the leader of Elizabeth's government, but competition was emerging as Elizabeth had attracted to younger men like Sir Christopher Hatton and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.

The generational dynamic in the Court was magnified by religion. By the 1580s the established Church of England was under attack by Catholics, who believed it to be illegitimate, and by people, generally lumped together as Puritans, who wished to see its worship and governing

structure reformed. Many of the Puritans thought the Church was too like Catholicism in practice and dress, and some were prompted by their Calvinist theology to urge that England's bishops be replaced by a presbyterian system.

Catholicism represented an international threat to the Queen's sovereignty. Since Elizabeth's excommunication in 1570, Catholics had been forbidden to recognize her authority over religion. Consequently, being a Roman Catholic made one a traitor *de facto*. Elizabeth never executed a Catholic for heresy, but several hundred people died for asserting that the Pope was the head of the Church.

The reality of this treason was brought home by the organized Catholic mission that began operating in England in the 1570s. Seminary priests were reviving English Catholicism. This was a political act, and the Crown reacted accordingly. Parliament enacted new laws against those who refused to participate in the state Church, and those who withdrew themselves, branded as "recusants," were fined.

The international Catholic conspiracy against Elizabeth reinforced English Protestant identity and encouraged England to do battle in defense of the faith. The more Puritanical were especially concerned to help beleaguered coreligionists in the Spanish Netherlands, where Calvinist rebels were fighting Spanish Catholic troops. As England entered the 1580s it was teetering on the brink of war with Spain. This attracted some people because it might be very profitable. On September 26, 1580, Sir Francis Drake's three-year voyage around the world ended in Plymouth harbor, his ship, the *Golden Hind*, laden with fabulous riches looted from Spanish America, triggering a national enthusiasm for voyages of trade and plunder. That same year, Richard Hakluyt advised the Muscovy Company to load their ships with English woolens and seek a northeast passage to Cathay. Meanwhile, Richard Hitchcock was urging that a fleet of 400 fishing ships should be sent to the Newfoundland Banks to harvest the "newland fish." The English nation was beginning its rapid expansion abroad, while its domestic economy acquired a new sophistication (Tawney and Power 1963, 3: 232–57).

Issues of war, peace, religion, and economics were all bound up with the problem of the succession to the throne. As Elizabeth aged, England's political classes became increasingly concerned about who would be the next sovereign. As the Earl of Essex told King James of Scotland in the late 1580s, "her Majesty could not live above a year or two" (Hammer 1999, 92).

From her accession, Elizabeth I had been reluctant to make her intentions on the succession clear for precisely the reason Essex was courting King James. To declare a successor was to give that person political power. She governed by dividing and confusing, keeping her enemies off balance. Nonetheless, it was widely believed Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic, would succeed her.

Since 1568 Mary had been a prisoner in England. She had come into the country as a refugee, escaping the revolt that put her infant son, James VI, on the throne of Scotland and established Protestantism as Scotland's faith. Once Mary arrived, she became a constant worry for Elizabeth's counselors, who were well aware that she was heir to the throne of England. From the very beginning of her stay, Mary attracted plotters. In 1572 the Duke of Norfolk was executed for his second attempt to marry her, and many of England's leaders clamored for her death. Elizabeth remained unpersuaded, honoring her cousin's royal status.

In the early 1580s, as international tensions heightened, Mary became the center of more plots. Anxious for Spanish help and protection, she offered to place herself, her son, and her kingdom in the hands of Philip II if he could free her. The Spanish ambassador was drawn into a plot which called for the Duke of Guise to bring a force, paid for by Spain, into England.

There it would be joined by English Catholics to free Mary. Known as the Throckmorton Plot, it was uncovered in 1584, and English public opinion became hysterically anti-Spanish. After that, Elizabeth began to think seriously about war with Spain.

Finally, in the summer of 1585, Elizabeth dispatched 4,000 men to aid the Dutch against the Spanish, telling the Dutch ambassadors, "You see, gentlemen, that I have opened the door, that I am embarking once for all with you in a war against the King of Spain." She sent her favorite, the Earl of Leicester, to lead the English army and to dominate the Dutch government. It was an important departure from Elizabeth's previous policy, leading the Tudor state into a war that lasted, in one form or another, until 1603.

In the meantime the long-running saga of Mary, Queen of Scots was coming to an end. In December of 1585 a Catholic exile named Gilbert Gifford was arrested at Dover. Gifford was carrying letters of introduction to Mary, for he was part of a network raising support for her. Sent to London for examination, Gifford changed sides. Thenceforth Mary's letters, smuggled out in beer barrels, were being read in London. They proved that she was urging a group of conspirators, associated with Anthony Babington, to invade England and murder Elizabeth. With this proof in hand, Elizabeth reluctantly agreed to act against Mary.

Tried before royal commissioners, Mary was found guilty of treason. Elizabeth, unwilling to execute an anointed queen, put off signing the death warrant. Instead, she attempted to convince Mary's jailers to murder her. To their credit, they refused. Finally, Elizabeth signed the warrant and it was carried out in haste, before she changed her mind again. Mary was executed on February 8, 1587. There was no longer a Catholic heir to the throne of England; the legacy passed to Mary's son James VI, raised a Protestant in Scotland.

However, Philip II procured a declaration from the Pope naming him the heir of Mary, rather than her son James VI, and began planning an invasion of England as a preliminary to defeating the rebels in the Low Countries. To stop Philip's Armada, Sir Francis Drake led a raid on the Spanish port of Cádiz in 1587, burning some thirty ships in the harbor.

The Armada finally put to sea on the last day of May, 1588. Half punitive expedition and half crusade, it was supposed to ferry the Duke of Parma's invasion army across the English Channel. Meanwhile, Cardinal Allen, representing English Catholics from Rome, was calling on them to take up arms against Elizabeth, with God's blessing.

When the Spanish fleet was finally sighted by Admiral Howard's scouts, a running battle began. The smaller, faster, better-armed English ships harried the Spanish, preventing them from linking with Parma's army and forcing them to run for the North Sea. Somewhere near the Firth of Forth, English pursuit stopped and divine wrath took over. Battered by storms, the Armada retreated toward Spain around Ireland, losing ship after weakened ship.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth was faced with a truly frightening situation. If the Spanish landed their army, it seemed doubtful that England would survive. The Spanish veterans were a much better army than those assembled hastily in England from local militias and lacking the infrastructure for keeping the field very long. They were never tested in battle, but their assembling gave Elizabeth a great opportunity for propaganda. On August 9, as the Spanish were retreating, she visited the army encamped at Tilbury. Appearing in armor and carrying a marshal's baton, she made a famous speech, declaring "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too."

It was one of England's proudest moments. God had displayed his favor by sending His winds to save His favorite nation, but the war had just begun. By fall an English fleet was sent to destroy the remnants of the Armada in the Spanish ports, to free Portugal from Spanish rule, and

to attack the Azores. The fleet besieged Lisbon, but failed to take it, and in the end the expedition was a failure. However, a naval war with Spain continued through the 1590s, with English privateers attacking Spanish ships all over the world in hopes of a capture like that of the *Madre de Dios*, which returned £80,000 on Elizabeth's investment of £3,000.

England was also at war in the Low Countries, sending more and more troops to aid the Dutch Protestants against Spain. In France, where a religious civil war was being helped along by English subsidies for the Huguenots, Elizabeth was being drawn into another conflict. When Henry III was assassinated, Henry of Navarre became Henry IV of France, appealing immediately for English aid against the Catholic League. By the fall of 1588 an English expeditionary force was serving with Henry IV as he besieged Paris.

The troops came home after the siege, but Elizabeth continued to give Henry IV money for his campaigns, since a French Protestant army counterbalanced the Spanish Catholic army in the Netherlands. This strategy worked for a while, but it drew Spain into direct intervention in France. Spanish troops occupied Blavet in Brittany, giving them a base for attacks on England, so in May 1591 English troops were landed in Brittany. Poor cooperation by the French royal forces, and Elizabeth's usual reluctance to resupply and reinforce, made the operation a failure. Another English force was sent in to Normandy to aid in the siege of Rouen. That, too, failed, but Elizabeth did not withdraw all of her forces from France until 1594, a year after Henry IV had converted to Catholicism. Elizabeth had entered France because it kept pressure on Spain in the Low Countries. Spain, for its part, stirred trouble in Ireland in order to keep pressure on England. War in Ireland was nothing new. English attempts to control the island had sparked rebellion after rebellion. From 1569 until 1573, and then again from 1579 until 1583, Munster was in rebellion, led by James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, the Earl of Desmond, aided by Spanish and Italian troops. The Desmond revolts were crushed, and in 1583, Desmond's estates began to be opened for the "plantation" of colonists. With Munster under control, the English turned their attention to mountainous Ulster, dominated by Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone.

As English pressure on Ulster increased, O'Neill reacted. By 1594 he was leading a full-scale revolt known as the Nine Years' War. Seeking support from Gaels and Old English, O'Neill tried to turn the war into a Catholic crusade. This attracted the Spanish, who sent troops. The critical years of the war were 1597–9, when several Irish victories made it appear that they might win. After the disastrous defeat at the Yellow Ford in 1599, Elizabeth sent the chivalrous Earl of Essex to Ireland to take command. Bragging he would quickly defeat O'Neill, he dallied. Then, when directly ordered by the Queen to attack, he made a truce instead. It left the Irish in control of all that they had taken and enraged Elizabeth. Although she commanded him not to leave his post, Essex decided that he had to return to Court to defend himself from his enemies there. In September 1599, abandoning the army, he arrived unexpectedly at Court, bursting into Elizabeth's bedroom while she was at her toilette.

Elizabeth was enraged at his behavior, and at his failure in Ireland. She relieved him of his command and sent Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, to replace him. Then she stripped Essex of his patent on sweet wines, depriving him of most of his income, and appointed a commission to investigate his actions. Disgraced, Essex believed that Robert Cecil and other counselors were poisoning the Queen's mind against him. If he could only get her away from them, she would understand his brilliance. He began scheming to seize the Queen. To stiffen the resolve of his followers he arranged to have Shakespeare's *Richard II*, a tale of a king removed by his nobles, performed at the Globe theater. His plot was betrayed by one of his confederates, and Essex desperately led 200 men through London, calling the populace to arms in defense of Elizabeth.

No one joined him. The Earl and four others were executed after a treason trial that was a set piece of legal theatrics.

With Essex gone, the Irish situation began to improve. In November 1601, O'Neill and a Spanish army made a joint attack on Mountjoy's forces. Mountjoy, however, surprised O'Neill as he was deploying his troops at Kinsale, ending Irish resistance and placing all of Ireland under English rule for the first time. O'Neill surrendered, on favorable terms, in March 1603, six days after Elizabeth died.

Elizabeth's government desperately needed more money than it had. In normal times the monarch paid for government out of the customs revenues, rents on Crown lands, and other sources of income. By 1584 the Treasury had accumulated some £300,000 in surpluses, thanks to Elizabeth's very parsimonious management. But war ate that surplus. Consequently, Parliament was convinced, in 1589, to grant an unusual double subsidy, but the subsidy Act insisted that this was no precedent; such taxes were not to be expected as a matter of course. By 1593 Elizabeth's Council sought a third subsidy, only to be rebuffed in the House of Commons, even though the Queen had spent £1,030,000 on the war and the subsidy of 1589 had yielded only £280,000. Eventually, after an arduous debate and the intervention of the House of Lords, the Commons agreed to pay, but with bad grace. The shortfalls were made up by money raised through Privy Seal loans, which Elizabeth always repaid promptly. When she died, her government was in debt by £340,000. If James I had shared her managerial philosophy, this debt would have been settled within a year, but he did not pay off the loans.

The real costs of the war were far greater than the money spent from the Treasury. Troops were levied and transported at the expense of the localities. Each recruit was armed and paid "coat and conduct" money by the town, guild, or other entity that raised him. Worse, soldiers mustered out were often discharged at the nearest port and expected to find their own way home. Many became beggars or bandits.

All this fueled resentment against the Crown, and against what many localities saw as dangerously increasing central power in Westminster. The clumsiness of the system made things even worse, as did corruption and the parsimony of the Crown. The entire governmental system, depending as it did on the willingness of local leaders voluntarily to govern their neighborhoods, was strained by the wars.

That the economic crisis triggered by the wars and bad harvests of the 1590s was not more profound is surprising. Although it triggered some troubles, such as the mini-rebellion in Oxfordshire in 1596, they were mitigated by changes in the economy. Agricultural production was becoming more efficient, releasing people to participate in the growing economic specialization appearing in urban areas. Iron, tin, and glass production rose, too, increasing demand for coal to such an extent that towns like Newcastle-on-Tyne boomed. On the consumer front, entrepreneurs, supported by an emerging national credit market, were displacing imported manufactured goods with native ones. These new enterprises stimulated the revival of the towns, after their long slump in the mid-sixteenth century, drawing the surplus population to them. That provided a very cheap workforce, since real wages were at an all-time low. All of this was especially evident in London, whose population exploded along with its prosperity. Taken all together, the standard of living in 1600 was remarkably higher than that of fifty years earlier.

Consumers fueled some of the boom; exports fed the rest. Companies were chartered to regulate and exploit the trade to various parts of the world. The Virginia Company, the Levant Company, the Muscovy Company, the Eastland (Baltic) Company, the East India Company, and others joined the Merchant Adventurers in dividing up foreign trade. Most of them specialized

in exporting English cloth. The so-called “new draperies,” lightweight woolens, were in high demand in warmer climates, and could be traded for valuable goods like spices. These brought high prices on the English market and fed the prosperity of the merchants lucky enough to own shares in these joint stock companies. Others, complaining bitterly that they were locked out of lucrative markets, were frequently attacked in Parliament.

Although there was no market for the new draperies in North America, entrepreneurs turned their eyes across the Atlantic. In 1580 perhaps forty vessels a year fished the Grand Banks for the “newland fish.” By 1604 this number had quadrupled, and by the 1620s two or three hundred ships a year made the voyage, bringing cheap cod to the tables of England and Europe. By the early seventeenth century, people were following the fishermen to North America, and by the mid-1620s tobacco was flowing into England from America, creating a return flow of manufactured goods and people. This hiccupping economic expansion was helped by the arrival of James I on the throne. He stayed out of foreign wars for a long time, allowing the domestic economy the benefits of peace.

Elizabeth went into a sudden, sharp decline in February 1603. Refusing to eat or sleep or even take to her bed, she sank into a deep depression. On March 23 she lost her voice, and early on the morning of March 24 she died. James VI of Scotland was proclaimed as James I of England that same morning.

Four issues dominated the politics of James’s reign. First, religious and ideological disagreement threatened the peace and forced the king to seek new ways of resolving the tensions. Second, there was never enough money in the Treasury to support a king who spent as if it was bottomless. Third, James’s belief in his royal authority clashed with English political values, provoking opposition in Parliament. Lastly, there was the problem of integrating Scotland and England into a single state. James picked at these knotty problems, often making them worse.

His accession buoyed the hopes of Puritans and Catholics alike, since his policies in Scotland made him appear tolerant of Catholics and inclined toward Calvinist church discipline. As he made his triumphal way south he was presented in Northamptonshire with the Millenary Petition, signed by a thousand ministers. They asked him to reform the liturgy, clergy, and doctrine of the Elizabethan Church. Coming from those who wished to see the Church “purified,” the petition was disliked by the bishops of the Church of which James was now the supreme governor. Representatives of both sides met at Hampton Court on January 14, 1604.

James entered into the debates with relish, displaying his own theological sophistication. In the end, he ordered his bishops to reform certain things, but he also made it clear that he had little patience with attacks on the Church of England. A moderate in religion himself, he had stormy relations with the imperious Presbyterian kirk of Scotland. He preferred a Church he could control, and was completely unsympathetic to any attacks on episcopacy. “No bishop, no king!” he exclaimed. Importantly, though, he did agree with them on one point – the need for a new translation of the Bible into English. Consequently, a team of academics and clerics was appointed to produce what became known as the King James Bible when it was printed in 1611.

While the Protestants argued over the form and discipline of the national Church, England’s Catholics had, despite the official paranoia, quietly coexisted with the regime for so long that they had evolved their own religious organization. An archpriest was, in theory, in charge of the English Catholics, although the Jesuits disagreed. Even before Elizabeth died they had been negotiating for toleration in exchange for the expulsion of missionary priests. Now they thought James, married to a Catholic and committed to religious reconciliation, might allow it.

The Catholics who tried to get tolerance in exchange for their allegiance were hated by some of their coreligionists, who wanted blood. A radical faction, led by Robert Catesby, plotted to blow up the King and Parliament. When the king came to open Parliament on November 6, 1605, they would explode thirty-six barrels of gunpowder beneath Westminster Hall. Wiping out the Protestant leadership would, they thought, trigger a Catholic rising that would bring the nation back to the Roman faith.

The man left to set fire to the powder in the palace cellar was Guy Fawkes. Disguised as a servant, he was waiting there when the Lord Chamberlain's men, tipped off by a Catholic who knew of the plot, captured him. The King was saved, and the nation engaged in an orgy of pious thanksgiving, cursing Catholics and praising God for His providence. Ironically, James, seeking religious peace, refused to hunt Catholics, despite the attempted assassination.

At the local level, however, religious tensions continued to stew. Scots clung to their kirk as something that made them different from their traditional enemies, the English. The English interpreted their prayer book in ways that suited each community, practicing pragmatic toleration most of the time. In those places where there was no agreed-upon local practice, tensions flared.

English local government allowed for much variation in the enforcement of religious uniformity. By the turn of the century local magistrates, increasingly convinced that their vocations demanded that they keep their communities pure, moved to outlaw swearing, drinking, and other crimes against the honor of God. For example, in 1606 Mayor Coldwell of Northampton proposed to the aldermen that the ale houses should be off-limits to the inhabitants, on pain of prison. Moreover, no swearer, drunkard, or idle person was to be eligible for public relief. The aldermen approved his proposal, so "all profaneness, dicing and carding, drinking fled clean out of the freedom of the town." This zeal for the town's good paid off, reported Richard Rawlidge, because "whereas the plague had continued in the said town above two years together, upon this reformation of the Magistrates the Lord stayed the judgment of the pestilence" (1628, sig. F1).

Similar policies were emerging elsewhere, with bans on profane actors and other irritants. Soon, Parliament began passing national legislation with the same intent. Ironically, this set the stage for a clash with the supreme governor of the Church, James. In 1615, returning from Scotland via Lancashire, James discovered that zealous Puritan magistrates had banned sports on Sunday, believing they defiled the Sabbath. Horrified, James issued a national order, known as the "Declaration of Sports," protecting the right to dance, practice archery, and follow other harmless recreations on Sunday afternoons. Lumping Catholics and Puritans together as enemies was an ill political omen, upsetting precarious religious balances through central intervention.

The accession of James I to the throne of England joined the rule of Scotland and England together in the same person, but it hardly united the two countries. Neither adopted the institutions or laws of the other; nor did they invent a third way. Sharing a king, they shared little else, to the frustration of James I/VI, who dreamed of the kingdom of Great Britain.

As far as James was concerned, when he became King of England, England and Scotland became one nation. Somehow he forgot that their institutions, customs, and self-interests could not easily blend. In 1604 England's Parliament quickly made it clear to him that his actions were to be constrained by England's established legal tradition. The House of Commons produced a document known as the Apology of the Commons, designed to teach their king to respect Parliament's privileges. It was never delivered, but they refused to grant him the title of King of Great Britain. Instead, a commission on unification was created to negotiate the status of the citizens of the two nations in the unified kingdom. The English arrogantly proposed simply to

annex Scotland as they had done Wales; the Scots refused, and little was done beyond erasing the laws controlling their joint borders and establishing that those Scots born after James's accession to the English throne were citizens of England in law.

One of the reasons for these actions was that the English commissioners shared the fear that James would bring a horde of Scots south to feast on England's wealth. Their fears were not unfounded. Although Elizabeth's wars, the unreformed rate book, inflation, and sheer inefficiency had drained the Treasury, James thought the English wealthier than the Scots, and made lavish gifts to his friends, spent wildly on good living, and refused to listen to the warning cries of his officials.

Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, had been carried over from Elizabeth's reign as the principal secretary. In 1608 he became, as his father had been, Lord Treasurer. But the Treasury was empty. He undertook reforms that improved the efficiency of collections and sought new ways to wring out pennies to throw into the maw of the deficit. In 1610, hoping for tax reform and new revenue, he went to Parliament. He proposed that they pay off the King's debts and increase his annual revenues by £200,000. The Commons bitterly demanded that he stop purveyance and the selling of wardships. There was intense resistance to the Great Contract, and it sank amid fears that a king with regular taxation would become an absolute monarch, able to govern without the advice and consent of Parliament.

When the attempt to get tax reform failed, Salisbury turned to drastic measures. The Crown began selling titles. This "inflation of honors" allowed people to purchase titles of gentility and nobility for fixed prices. For £10,000 one could become an earl. Selling Crown property, or raising the rents on it, he also began borrowing from those with Crown contracts. In 1611 Salisbury ordered a "benevolence" to be collected. A forced loan, it was not expected to be repaid.

Arbitrary increases in the customs rates, forced loans, and other tools were not good for trade. Neither was the habit of selling monopolies on commercial activities. The worst abuses of this system became apparent in 1614 when the Cockayne Project was launched. It was intended to enrich a small group of investors, led by Alderman Cockayne, by giving them control of the export of colored cloth and prohibiting the export of undyed cloth. The patentees were unable to make it work, and it was an unmitigated disaster. The price of cloth collapsed in 1616.

The Earl of Salisbury died in 1612, and was succeeded by the royal favorite, Robert Carr, a Scot who became Earl of Somerset. Allying with the powerful Howard family through a love affair, Somerset built a position of great influence by 1613. Salisbury had been unable to pay the King's bills and Somerset was no better. Desperate for money because of his daughter's marriage and the funeral of his son, Prince Henry, James called Parliament into session in 1614. Unfortunately for the King, this Parliament was not in a mood to grant supply; it was concerned that its authority was being eroded by the Crown. Ever since 1604 tension had been building between the King and Parliament over the right to tax. In 1606 in *Bate's Case*, the judges held the King had the right to impose custom taxes as a matter of his prerogative, without Parliament's blessing. Salisbury used this decision to augment royal revenues. In 1614 the House of Commons attacked this taxation without representation. The session was completely fruitless, passing no legislation at all. As Reverend Thomas Lorkin famously named it, it was an "addle Parliament."

Somerset failed to deliver the cash the King needed, but he, and his Catholic Howard in-laws, helped incline the King toward marrying his son Charles to the Spanish infanta, Maria. As negotiations went forward, the nation became more and more agitated about the "Spanish Match." Protestant England was horrified by the idea that Prince Charles might marry a Spanish Catholic, threatening the religion they held dear and introducing their old enemy into the kingdom.

Somerset was displaced by George Villiers, reputed to be the handsomest man in England. Son of a gentry family, his looks overcame his lack of breeding, and his backers carefully trained him to seduce the King's affections. Starting as cupbearer at the royal table, he quickly succeeded. James knighted him in 1615 and made him a gentleman of his chamber and master of the horse. In 1616 he was made a viscount, and six months later Duke of Buckingham. Buckingham applied himself with great energy to the King's affairs, gathering offices to himself and demonstrating shrewd political skill. Growing richer and richer, he married into the nobility. By 1618 he was clearly the King's favorite.

In that year the Thirty Years' War began on the Continent. James I's daughter Elizabeth was married to Prince Frederick of Bohemia and, when his forces were crushed at the battle of White Mountain, it appeared that the Protestant cause was in extreme danger. James was anxious to help his son-in-law, but equally anxious not to break the peace he had striven so hard to maintain. He engaged in feverish diplomacy and, in 1621, he summoned Parliament to ask for its support in his efforts. It was happy to pass two subsidies, apparently in the belief that the nation was preparing for war in defense of Protestantism. The quid pro quo was to allow Parliament its head over the hated monopolies and abuses. One result of this attack on governmental corruption was that the Lord Chancellor, Francis Bacon, was impeached for taking bribes in court cases.

The second session of the Parliament of 1621 ended in disaster for the King. Brimming with war fever, the Commons petitioned that if the Spanish did not withdraw their troops from Bohemia, war would be declared against Spain. For good measure, they proposed that Prince Charles marry a Protestant, ending the negotiations over the Spanish Match. These demands cut too far into the royal prerogative for James to accept them and he scolded the House. It responded with cries that its traditional liberties were being violated. In frustration the King dissolved Parliament, leaving most of its work undone.

In the popular mind, the failure of the Parliament of 1621 was the result of Spanish machinations, a Jesuit plot. This stoked the anti-Catholic paranoia of the country, but James was proceeding with negotiations for the marriage of Charles and Maria, oblivious to the fear it provoked. In 1623 Charles and Buckingham went off on a boyish secret journey to Spain; Charles wished to see his bride. The nation was horrified. Philip IV of Spain found his bluff called. He was not very interested in alliance with Great Britain and now, with Charles in his Court, he raised the stakes, demanding religious toleration for Catholics. After six months Charles, though an ardent lover, admitted defeat and withdrew.

Britain went mad with joy when Charles returned without a bride. He and Buckingham now followed an anti-Spanish policy, and James gave them their head. In 1624 Parliament was called in an attempt to get money for what they hoped would be a war on Spain. Once again Parliament proved truculent. Although it did grant three subsidies, it tied the money to specific conditions that usurped the royal prerogative.

Now, still desperate for money, James and Charles turned to France, negotiating a marriage with Henrietta-Maria, Louis XIII's sister. They wanted aid against Spain and a large dowry. The dowry came, but, when James I died and Charles went to war, the French failed to help. The reign of James I ended in March 1625. It left the nation in the hands of Charles I and Buckingham. They began the new reign with deep debts and political divisions. Buckingham was popularly blamed for all the trouble, and he was assassinated in 1628.

James had inherited problems from Elizabeth. The precarious finances of the Crown, the religious divisions, and the succession continued to haunt him, but in different ways. He made the fiscal problems worse, irritating the parliamentary classes with his expansive lifestyle and free

spending. Believing that religious peace was possible in Europe, he fed anti-Catholic paranoia at home with his attempts to marry his son to Spain. At the same time he deepened divisions among the Protestants by meddling with the locally crafted versions of the Anglican settlement. Pursuing peace was good for the economy as long as it lasted, but the final years of the reign were spoiled by his confusing attempts to deal with the Thirty Years' War. At the heart of the problem was James himself. A foreigner who never seems to have understood the English constitution, he was never able to use it to best advantage.

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Continental Influences

Lawrence F. Rbu

The Renaissance in England derives its major impulse from Continental humanism, whose origins can be traced back to Italy in the fifteenth, and even the fourteenth, century. Writers such as Giovanni Boccaccio and Lorenzo Valla attest to the sense of a new culture's dawning, and the revival of the arts and learning signals for them the coming of a new epoch. The revival of classical culture especially characterizes the educational movement fostered by Continental humanists. The discovery of lost texts from antiquity and the recirculation of neglected ones in more authoritative editions helped provide humanists with a new canon. Such educators also chose to increase their emphasis on certain aspects of the medieval curriculum. The study of rhetoric in particular acquired greater importance, and the inherently theatrical nature of the art of persuasion made mastery of oratorical skills apt training for playwrights who would ultimately bring them to bear in works for the English stage.

The belated arrival of Renaissance culture in England made it coincide with the Reformation. Thus, English Protestants felt a deep ambivalence about the Continental culture on which so many of their achievements were founded. For example, in *The Schoolmaister*, Queen Elizabeth's former tutor, Roger Ascham, urges *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) by Baldassare Castiglione on English youth, for they can read it at home in England, especially since Sir Thomas Hoby has so ably translated it into their native tongue (Ascham [1570] 1967, 50). Such reading can spare them the manifold hazards of travel in Italy, whose Circean allure would threaten English virtue at every turn.

When Thomas Nashe reviews the fortunes of humanism at the end of the sixteenth century in *The Unfortunate Traveler* (1594), Jack Wilton's Continental tour includes significant visits to Münster and Wittenberg as well as a long journey through major cities of Italy such as Venice, Florence, and Rome. Nashe's travelogue records a jaundiced view of Continental culture near the *fin de siècle*, when Elizabethan tragedy has already developed its own resources for registering profound skepticism about humanistic values that initially reached England trailing clouds of

glory associated with their earlier appearance in Italy. Hamlet, the Wittenberg scholar come home for his father's funeral and, as it turns out, his mother's hasty remarriage, epitomizes this perspective. He could be inditing a melancholy gloss on the exemplary optimism of Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486) when he delivers the following speech to his classmates and supposed friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god – the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? (2.2.293–9)¹

Such sentiments, despite the skeptical viewpoint characteristic of tragic drama, supply some evidence for Jacob Burckhardt's oft-debated claim that, during the Renaissance in Italy, "man became a spiritual *individual*, and recognized himself as such" (1958, 1: 143). Perhaps this alleged "discovery" of the individual occurred during the Renaissance, or perhaps it took place in Paradise after the Fall. One way or the other, it entails the simultaneous discovery of the isolation of the individual, which tragic drama of the English Renaissance eloquently explores. Tragic figures in an agonizing drama like Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1605), for example Cordelia, Edgar, Edmund, Kent, Gloucester, and Lear himself, all stand vividly alone in the face of a devastating ordeal, whether or not they represent definitive manifestations of a previously inaccessible individuality.

In his effort to fathom the world of this play, Stanley Cavell invokes certain Continental thinkers of the early sixteenth century whose writings can help to characterize the intellectual milieu in which English Renaissance drama was composed. The bearings he takes reproduce those evident in Roger Ascham's ambivalence in *The Schoolmaister* and in Jack Wilton's itinerary in *The Unfortunate Traveler*. For example, Cavell asserts the presence of "Machiavelli's knowledge of the world" in *King Lear*, and he discerns this knowledge not just in "attitudes of realism and cynicism" but in the "experience of the condition to which these attitudes are appropriate – in which the inner and outer worlds have become totally disconnected, and man's life is all public, among strangers, seen only from outside. Martin Luther saw the same thing at the same time, but from inside" (2003, 67–8). The final proposition comes as an abrupt surprise, juxtaposing two figures from opposite ends of a spectrum that can include such extremes as the Machiavellian ruthlessness of Edmund and Cordelia's uncompromising integrity or, in the *Duchess of Malfi* (1612–14), Bosola's shady connivance and the Duchess' heroic steadfastness. This striking association of two diverse thinkers can represent in small the effect of the wide range of Continental influences that permeates English Renaissance drama. Like the *Hamlet* passage above, it also suggests where this culture's most profound thinking takes place – on the public stage – and where not, among so-called philosophers, theologians, et al.

For example, when we encounter Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–7), we must reckon with a confluence of developments readily signaled by allusion to both Machiavelli and Luther. Such references can again remind us that the belated appearance of Renaissance culture in England coincided significantly with the Reformation. Humanist scholarship and, especially, the increasingly historical philology that such scholars initially applied to pagan classics were soon directed toward critical study of sacred texts. Such habits of reading authorized fresh responses to passages from Scripture whose traditional meanings posed no threat to institutional arrangements. This new scholarship facilitated the spread of religious reform.

Thus, when Shylock seeks to justify usury, he summons as a proof-text Genesis 30:25–43 and retells the gist of that episode, Jacob’s clever exaction of his final wages from Laban. Antonio, his primary interlocutor in this exchange, offers a rival response to the incident recounted:

Sby. This was a way to thrive; and he was blest
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.
Ant. This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for –
A thing not in his power to bring to pass
But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven.
(1.3.85–9)

However stereotypically Jewish Shylock may seem in this scene and elsewhere in this play, however demonized this victim of prejudice may become as the action unfolds, the reading that he offers of Jacob’s ploy against Laban is idiosyncratic and thus bespeaks a Protestant dilemma: proliferation of unlicensed interpretations of the Bible.

For example, in a sermon delivered at Paul’s Cross in 1589, Richard Bancroft complains of text-torturing Protestant expositors. Although he opposes what a later age will call the magisterium of the Catholic Church (that is, its teaching function, especially in regard to biblical interpretation), Bancroft is alarmed by unqualified readers of Holy Writ who put strains on passages from that sacred text and wrest meanings from them that lead to heresy and schism. Bancroft cites Augustine to the effect that “faithful ignorance is better than rash knowledge,” and he goes on to invoke Gregory of Nazianzus’ assertion, “It falleth not within the compas of everie mans understanding to determine and judge in matters of religion: *Sed exercitatorum*: but of those that are well experienced and exercised in them” (Bancroft 1588/9, 33–41). Bancroft’s distress at liberties taken by inexperienced readers participates in the mounting anxiety over Protestant tendencies spinning out of control in the 1590s.

Traditional exegesis, both Jewish and Christian, had gone to some lengths to make cosmetic improvements on Jacob’s habitual tricksterism. Such behavior in an official role model could occasion scandal and required interpretive redress (see Kugel 1998, 208–10). Tudor Bibles, both radical and conservative, incorporate this approach to the episode Shylock recounts. The Geneva Bible (1560) pleads Jacob’s defense in thus glossing Genesis 30:37, which describes Jacob’s device: “Jacob herein used no deceit, for it was God’s command.” The Bishops’ Bible (1568), with reference to Genesis 31:9, explains away Jacob’s ploy: “It is not lawfull by fraude to seke recompence of iniurie; therefore Moyses [Moses] sheweth afterwarde that God thus instructed Jacob.” Thus, when Shylock offers his own self-justifying gloss on Jacob’s ruse, he enacts an odd analogue to what Luther proclaimed as the priesthood of all believers. His appropriation of the official expositor’s role strikes a distinctly Protestant note. To paraphrase a question Portia poses in the play, “Which is the Gentile here, and which the Jew?”

But Shylock’s character also betokens transformations that Niccolò Machiavelli’s reputation underwent in its north European reception. Barabas, the protagonist of *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe (1589/90), probably served as the immediate dramatic stimulus for Shakespeare’s creation of Shylock; and Barabas’ affiliation with the Italian archetype of “politic” villainy occurs prominently at the outset of Marlowe’s play. In one of the landmarks of mythic wickedness associated with “old Nick,” Machevill (whose very name resonates with other such derogatory turns on its original as “Match a Villain”) thus begins the prologue:

Albeit the world think Machevill is dead,
 Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps,
 And now the Guise is dead, is come to France
 To view this land, and frolic with his friends.
 But such as love me, guard me from their tongues,
 And let them know that I am Machevill,
 And weigh not men, and therefore not men's words.
 (*The Jew of Malta*, Prologue 1–8)²

Mention of the Duke of Guise evokes this statesman's responsibility for the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of French Huguenots in August of 1572. Moreover, this French connection suggests a further Continental source of anti-Machiavellian feeling, which derives from resentment of the Florentine queen mother Catherine de Medici's powerful influence on French affairs from 1559 to 1589. Her anti-Protestant policies, together with her foreign origins, served to focus anti-Italian sentiment on both her and her "Machiavellian" favorites at Court. Such an influential work as Innocent Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel* (1576) thus emerged from a setting where the Florentine politician was thoroughly demonized, and its English reception readily affirmed that dark image.

Machiavelli's resolutely secular humanism was promptly relocated into the context of religious strife so pervasive in English Renaissance culture as to destabilize that very label, "Renaissance," which often overemphasizes continuities with classical antiquity and occludes the concomitant impact of the Reformation crisis on English drama. Richard of Gloucester invokes "the murderous Machiavel" as a measure of the wickedness he means to exceed (*Richard III*, 3.2.193), yet, in the following self-description, he sounds enough like Shylock to demonstrate the confluence of developments that makes the perspectives of Luther and Machiavelli undeniable cohabitants of the dramatic worlds represented on stage in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England:

But then I sigh, and with a piece of scripture
 Tell them that God bids us do good for evil;
 And thus I clothe my naked villainy
 With odd old ends, stolen forth of Holy Writ,
 And seem a saint when most I play the devil.
 (*Richard III*, 1.3.332–6)

The demystification of religion and its consequent manipulability for purposes of gaining and maintaining power inspire the cynical calculations of Machiavellian politicians as such figures emerge on the English stage. Reasons of state, which can traditionally signify a leader's concern for the public good, become merely a cover for selfish ambition that stops at nothing to advance its personal agenda. Protestant scrupulosity about matters of conscience, as well as virulent anti-Italian sentiment, only intensify the demonization of such villainy. Whatever concern for the commonweal may constitute princely *virtù* in Machiavelli's guide for governors thus disappears in bringing this dark legend to the English stage in such figures as Richard of Gloucester and Edmund, the illegitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester in *King Lear*.

The wheel of Fortune, a medieval emblem of the way of the world (especially for those in high places), epitomizes the kind of medieval tragedy labeled *de casibus*, which undergoes significant modifications in its deployment on the English Renaissance stage. Machiavelli's telling opposition of *virtù* to *fortuna* reflects a new dynamic of rival forces in the arena of human struggle

that plays itself out in tragic agons. The ready moralization of overweening ambition now submits to revised criteria. In an arena where Fortune's sway no longer receives automatic acceptance and knowing nods from arbiters of public virtue, the previously low estimate of worldly wisdom and high regard for divine providence no longer saps the drama from the contest between *virtù* and *fortuna*. Machiavelli notoriously outraged conventional sensibilities with his blunt rhetoric, and we experience to this day a comparably shocked response when reading, in Chapter 25 of *The Prince*, his characterization of Fortune. She is a woman who responds favorably to rough, even violent, treatment. Traditional iconography represented Dame Fortune being bound to her wheel by an elderly hermit symbolizing Wisdom or Poverty. This fresh assault on her, recommended by Machiavelli, comes from self-serving policy ready to change its approach with the needs of the moment, not from self-sacrificing faith and steady forbearance despite mundane vicissitudes.

The realpolitik of Machiavelli stands in striking contrast to the Platonic idealism of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528). This manual of conduct for aspirants at Court went through almost eighty editions during its first ninety years in print and thus enjoyed an exceptionally widespread circulation throughout Europe. Although previous texts such as Plato's *Symposium*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Bembo's *Gli asolani* notably influenced the composition of Castiglione's vernacular classic, the chief model was Cicero's *De oratore*. This pre-text not only signals the pervasive presence of the rhetorical tradition in this exemplary work of Renaissance literature; it also demonstrates the impact of humanist scholarship on the new literary culture of this era. For this dialogue of Cicero's on the ideal orator was first rediscovered and published during the fifteenth century, thus providing, paradoxically, an ancient classic of recent vintage for imitative appropriation.

Both Cicero's and Castiglione's Platonism should also remind us that the Renaissance discovered abundant renewable literary energy in that Greek tradition, which had suffered sore neglect for the better part of a millennium in Western Europe. As James Hankins puts it,

The period from Petrarch to Ficino was in fact an epoch when the philosophy of Plato was valued and studied more than at any time since Justinian closed the Athenian Academy in 529. For those who study the sources for the intellectual life of the period, the evidence of a Platonic revival leaps to the eye. (1990, 1:4)

In England, Sidney is the most Continental of canonical Elizabethan poets. His *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) inspired the sonnet boom of the 1590s, and its constant appeals to the terms of Petrarchism and neoplatonism distinguish Sidney's sonnet sequence both as an inheritor of those traditions and as a viable inheritance for poets-to-come on the stage as well as page. When Hamlet subverts Pico's optimism about the dignity of man, he is challenging the neoplatonic promise of transcendence that Pico celebrates. When Hamlet displays the very ecstasy of love and laments his lack of art to reckon his groans, he is striking familiar Petrarchan notes and attitudes, however clumsily.

Courtiers and courts, quite frequently in Italy, are staple characters and settings in English Renaissance drama. Such Italian settings need not represent actual locales; in Tudor and Stuart England, Italy was as much a place in the heart as a place on the map. It was a state of mind where ordeals of conscience and political crises could play themselves out in dramatic conflicts. When critics sometimes mislocate the action of Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling* (1622) and call its setting Italy rather than Spain, they are making an edifying mistake and producing an

accidentally allegorical reading. They are referring to the spiritual homeland of moral corruption and religious error, also known as Italy in the English Renaissance imagination. In *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) Nashe thus allegorizes Italy as “the Academie of man-slaughter, the sporting-place of murther, the Apothecary-shop of poyson for all Nations” (1958, 1:186).

In such settings, whether explicitly situated in Italy or elsewhere, playwrights repeatedly strike keynotes of Castiglione’s guide to conduct, which in turn makes intelligible ideals of behavior at Court whose manifestation on stage takes innumerable forms during this period. The affectation of Osric in *Hamlet*, the high-mindedness (and consequent vulnerability) of Cassio in *Othello*, the ambition and sinister compliance of Oswald in *King Lear* – all bespeak facets of an institution and its habitués under analysis in *The Book of the Courtier*. These sentiments, which we encounter at the opening of John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, reprise central terms and values of the moral discourse on courtliness that Castiglione’s manual of conduct best epitomizes.

a Prince’s court
Is like a common fountain, whence should flow
Pure silver drops in general. But if’t chance
Some curs’d example poison it near the head,
Death and diseases through the whole land spread.
(1.1.11–15)

Webster’s couplet signals the proverbial nature of such an observation whose presence in Castiglione brings closure to an unusually complex moment. There the potentially beneficial uses of duplicity and deception win those typically disparaged qualities an endorsement in terms redolent of the Epicurean tradition. Using “the veil of pleasure,” courtiers should “beguile” the prince “with salutary deception like cunning physicians who often smear the rim of the cup with some sweet cordial when they wish to give bitter-tasting medicine to frail and sickly children” (Castiglione [1528] 1998, 365).³

Such indirect means to ostensibly good ends easily raise suspicions. A world where virtue must operate under cover threatens to make virtue indistinguishable from vice. Elsewhere in Castiglione’s manual of conduct the recommended flexibility of the self can seem hypocritical – or, should we say, theatrical – rather than the exercise of civic virtue. As Federico Fregoso puts it:

I would have our Courtier comply with [his prince’s wishes], even if it rubs him the wrong way, so that, on seeing him, his prince will always think he must have something pleasant to say to him. This will come about if he has the good sense to discern what his prince likes, and the wit and prudence to accommodate him ... But if our Courtier ... happens to be in private with his lord, he must become a different person. He must set aside serious concerns for another time and place, and engage in conversation that will amuse and please his lord, not disturb his needed peace of mind. (Castiglione [1528] 1998, 145–7).

Such pliability in thus fashioning the self entails a capacity for performance. Whether due to wit and prudence or to mere self-interest, the ideal of role-playing in everyday life signifies the deep relation between the world of the stage and that of mundane ambition in pursuing a career at court. But it also signals the constraints of power, if not despotism, that hobble free expression at court and muffle dissent. As Federico Fregoso puts it in his next response to his interlocutor, Cesare Gonzago: “You see what a great risk men run who rashly enter into conversation in a prince’s presence without being invited” (Castiglione [1528] 1998, 148–9).

In *The Winter's Tale*, King Leontes' chief adviser acts as an exemplary Plato, mentioned as a role model by Ottaviano Fregoso in Castiglione. When Plato found himself serving the uneducable, indeed implacable, tyrant Dio of Syracuse, he left that king's service to avoid implication in his abuses of power. Similarly, Camillo finds himself exposed to mortal danger when he receives an evil command from his royal master. Leontes asks Camillo to poison the visiting Bohemian monarch, Polixenes, whom Camillo serves as cupbearer during Polixenes' stay in Sicilia. Camillo must either carry out that treacherous assassination or face the inevitably fatal consequences of disobedience to his king. These intolerable options prompt Camillo to leave the service of this tyrant, although he first makes an ardent appeal to Leontes' conscience on behalf of the other innocent victim of his rash accusation, the Sicilian queen, Hermione, whom Leontes wrongly suspects of adultery with Polixenes.

Despite Camillo's eloquence and courage, this crisis requires some English variations on this Italian theme of persuasive intervention by way of salutary deception to achieve the desired end. Once Camillo departs, Paulina, whose name bespeaks her Protestant proclivity to risk antinomian heresy, intervenes in Leontes' murderous intentions and refuses to sugarcoat her defiance. Ultimately, she becomes a sort of high priestess and presides at Hermione's virtual resurrection, which depends on rare Italian mastery in the arts. No magic number of penitential ordeals will suffice; but a momentary breakthrough, when "affliction has a taste / As sweet as any cordial comfort," baptizes anew the Epicurean aesthetics of courtliness in Castiglione. Giulio Romano's lifelike statue of the late Queen brings about Leontes' change of heart.

Lucretius' philosophical poem *De rerum natura* was another fifteenth-century humanist rediscovery that, like Cicero's *De oratore*, created fresh opportunities for Renaissance writers. Read selectively, it allowed poets to justify their simultaneous pursuit of both the good and the beautiful without disabling crises of conscience and without platonic metaphysics. Allusions to Lucretius' famous lines about why sound doctrine requires the sweetness of poetic expression occur frequently both in Italian treatises of literary theory and in more widely circulated Italian texts soon to be rendered into English, like Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. Sir Philip Sidney also appeals to their argument in his *Defense of Poesy*. Since some of these lines are cited in Book III of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, the six or more centuries when there was no known text of Lucretius need not mean that these lines were entirely forgotten, even though a complete text of Quintilian was not rediscovered until the fifteenth century. They may have had a life of their own in rhetorical manuals and become proverbial with no reference to their Roman republican origins and their association with a notorious school of Hellenistic philosophy (see Prosperi 2004). Still, the recovery of Lucretius' poem and its validation of pleasure in manifold ways that frequently include poetry are increasingly discernible in Renaissance drama. Both the language and sentiments of Camillo and Paulina repeatedly register this development in their different approaches to the same problem, the King of Sicilia's hardness of heart and mortal culpability – as does both Leontes' admission that he has "drunk and seen the spider" and his ordering a poisoned cup. Proverbially, spiders alone could suck poison from flowers where bees suck honey.

To account for the undeniably striking difference "between a poet of 1500 and a poet of 1600," George Saintsbury sought to briefly summarize the Italian influence on English prosody in the sixteenth century. He cautiously puts it this way: "It would indeed be almost sufficient, though not quite accurate, to substitute for the two words 'Italian influence' the four 'influence of the sonnet.' For it was this powerful form which directly brought the influences of the language which had been its cradle, to bear" (1961, 1: 303–4). Castiglione's interlocutors briskly scrub the

possibility of sonneteering and some of its associated themes as an option for the game they will play. Such topics will promote behavior precisely the opposite of what they esteem: affectation (*affettazione*) instead of nonchalance (*sprezzatura*) and grace (*grazia*). Only a hypertheatrical figure, like the Unico Aretino (whose name itself is a giveaway), would think he could get away with pretending to spontaneously recite such a formally complicated sort of poem from memory.

Yet allusions to a signature figure of speech in Petrarchan love poetry, oxymoron, make a distinct impression in this early exchange. Echoing Petrarch's phrase "dolci sdegni" ("sweet disdain") in the *Rime Sparse* (204.13), Ottaviano Fregoso proposes an investigation into the motives of lovers who experience pleasure in their beloved's anger and disdain (Castiglione [1528] 1998, 33). Later, Pietro Bembo will bring the whole *Book of the Courtier* to its spellbinding conclusion with his monologue about the neoplatonic ladder of love. As the author of *Gli asolani* (1505), with its meditative dialogues interspersed with sonnets of love, Bembo is the right man for that job, although it is well to remember how recently Plato's voice had begun to reemerge audibly in the West after almost a millennium of silence. Only in Florence during the previous century had Marsilio Ficino overseen the collection and translation of the entire Platonic corpus into Latin. As the great advocate of both the neoplatonic philosophy of love and Petrarch's vernacular Italian style, Bembo decisively links those two ways of understanding and expressing the experience of love to the composition of sonnets. For English inheritors of that poetic form, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* so memorably reinforces the coupling of neoplatonism and Petrarchism in sonneteering that they become recurrent features in other such efforts, like Shakespeare's and Edmund Spenser's, whether they are taken up skeptically or wholeheartedly.

In *Twelfth Night*, as Shakespeare's successful engagement with comedy is coming to an end, he subjects certain conventions of sonneteering to corrosive satire; and the language of love, in figures so hopelessly stuck on themselves as Duke Orsino and Countess Olivia, sounds forced and phony enough to deserve such treatment. Just a few years earlier, however, in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *As You Like It*, the passion of love plausibly, even though still laughably, seeks expression in characters whose feelings we are more likely to respect, despite (or because of) the various ironies involved in their development. Trying to write sonnets, as Beatrice and Benedick do in *Much Ado*, and writing many lousy ones, as Orlando does in *As You Like It*, both result in helplessly clumsy expressions of the utterly relatable humanity of these endearing characters. Moreover, Benedick's ultimate willingness to defy a whole college of wit crackers represents a giant step in precisely the right direction of his frank acknowledgment of love.

Orlando's sonnets, although nonexistent in the Ariostan source that gives *As You Like It* the name of its main male character, hang on trees in the forest of Arden, whereas Medoro carved his love poems in the bark of such a wood in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Medoro's consummately anti-Petrarchan and anti-Platonic lines, however, boldly give voice to the satisfaction of his and Angelica's bodily desires; and his Aristotelian name, which transcribes succinctly the Golden Mean, further distinguishes this foot soldier from the erratically passionate bipolarity of most of the poem's aristocratic cavaliers. Since Orlando can read Arabic, his undeniable realization of Angelica's newfound love and satisfaction, which is legible in Medoro's verses, ultimately drives him crazy. His madness, however, arises more like Othello's or, on a smaller scale, like Claudio's in *Much Ado*; and Bembo's sublimation of love into a Platonic idea of perfection gives rise to this insanity in both of these characters.

Sidney promises that patrons of poets will "dwell on superlatives" because their generosity will inspire many sonnets in their praise, and these superlatives are like Platonic ideas of perfection or "foreconceits," which Sidney rescued from the accusation of lying because they "affirm nothing." As fictional constructs, like the idea of the perfect courtier, they may move our hearts,

but our heads should know better. Like the “city of words” imagined by the interlocutors in Plato’s *Republic*, superlatives exist nowhere on earth. Thinking otherwise may entail a dialectic of extremes that abruptly transforms the best case into the worst. Tragically, for example, in *Othello* the “divine Desdemona[’s]” name, once “as fresh as Dian’s visage,” becomes “as black as [Othello’s] face”; and, comically, in *Much Ado about Nothing* “the idea of [Hero’s] life” fails to “sweetly creep into [Claudio’s] study of imagination,” as Friar Francis promises. Only “shallow fools” (such as Dogberry and the Watch) can bring to light what wisdom “could not discover”; and only then does Hero’s image reappear to Claudio “[i]n the rare semblance” of his love at first sight as he now remembers it. Such comic platonizing reflects the Pauline inflection of Hebrew wisdom, and Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly* comes readily to mind as an intertext or even a source, if that’s what we’re seeking. During the Renaissance, however, his Christian Platonism feels more like “a whole climate of opinion,” as Auden claimed about Freud’s influence in 1939 (see Rhu 2014).

Castiglione’s guide to behavior at court also reflects social crises central to dramatic conflict in English Renaissance theater, where ordeals of change in society at large find compelling expression. For a social climber, like Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, would be more willing to make such radical accommodations as “becoming a different person” on cue, than an established aristocrat whose sense of entitlement might balk at politic ingratiating. The very language of identity deployed in discussing the ideal courtier betrays the major fault line between upwardly mobile aspirants to places at court and the traditional aristocracy. The perfect courtier is often called a “cavalier,” a term whose root meaning signals the horsemanship associated with knighthood and the ranks of the established nobility. As the Tudor monarchy became more centralized, legal and diplomatic and more generally “secretarial” skills increased in value. The adroit application of a humanistic education could serve one better than mere entitlement, and there arose a corps of bureaucrats contemptuously labeled “carpet knights” by resentful aristocrats. In *1 King Henry IV* (1596–7), Hotspur’s lengthy excursus in justification of his failure to supply the King with prisoners taken at Holmedon Hill vividly portrays an encounter between effeminate courtliness and macho chivalry from the perspective of aristocratic contempt.

My liege, I did deny no prisoners;
 But I remember, when the fight was done,
 When I was dry with rage and extreme toil,
 Breathless and faint, leaning on my sword,
 Came there a certain lord, neat and trimly dressed,
 Fresh as a bridegroom, and his chin, new-reaped,
 Showed like a stubble-land at harvest-home.
 He was perfuméd like a milliner
 And ’twixt his finger and his thumb he held
 A pouncet-box, which ever and anon
 He gave his nose and took’t away again –
 Who therewith angry, when it next came there
 Took it in snuff – and still he smiled and talked;
 And as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
 He called them untaught knaves, unmannerly
 To bring a slovenly unhandsome corpse
 Betwixt the wind and his nobility.
 With many holiday and lady terms
 He questioned me; amongst the rest demanded
 My prisoners on your majesty’s behalf.

(1.3.28–47).

In *Twelfth Night* (1601–2), such tensions find further expression in cruel tricks Sir Toby Belch and his companions play on the steward Malvolio, whose ambition and self-importance leave him wide open for sadistic scapegoating. After all, in comparison with a blood relation to the titled lady of the house, just who does this merely domestic functionary think he is? Similar anxieties about status and kindred terms of social value come into play at the Duchess of Malfi's court, where the careers of Daniel de Bosola and Antonio Bologna stand in marked contrast. The former, a "graduate," gains the provisorship of the Duchess' horse in exchange for his services as a spy in the employ of her brother the Cardinal. Antonio, her steward, having distinguished himself in jousting, participates in this exchange with Duke Ferdinand, her other brother:

Fer. You are a good horseman, Antonio ... what do you think of good horsemanship?
Ant. Nobly, my lord ... out of brave horsemanship, arise the first sparks of growing resolution,
 that raise the mind to noble action.

(*The Duchess of Malfi*, 1.2.61–7)

When Duke Ferdinand then replies to Antonio, "You have bespoke it worthily," we should remember that shortly before, in another conversation, the Duke has remarked, "Methinks you that are courtiers should be my touchwood, take fire when I give fire; that is, laugh when I laugh, were the subject never so witty" (1.2.43–6).

The tension between chivalric and courtly virtue becomes a topic in *The Book of the Courtier* in terms both of the comparative value of letters and arms and of the relationship between virtue and birth. That there should be dialogue about such matters itself suggests the existence of social tensions and the questions they prompt. That those studies called the humanities are deemed the crown of a courtier's – or cavalier's! – accomplishments belatedly registers the triumph of humanistic education, at least from Castiglione's nostalgic perspective ([1598] 1998, 91–3). That birth and virtue may not be inextricably bound up in one another shows there remains considerable play in the contest between Fortune and virtue, in whatever sense one construes that second term.

For example, Malevole, in John Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604), chafes Bilioso as "my dear Castilio" in a scene (1.4.90) reminiscent of Hamlet's raillery and exposure of Osric's chameleon-like accommodations of the Prince's every whim. This ridicule of hypocrisy by Hamlet, who is himself a playwright and actor within the play bearing his name, ironically reveals the necessary complicity of both the virtuous and the vicious in the theatricality of life at court, whether in the ducal palace that Castiglione idealizes, or in degenerate Elsinore whose treachery Hamlet must fathom and resist. Malevole shares this skill for theatrical mastery, not only of trivial time-servers like Bilioso, but also of his mightier and more sinister opposites at court in Genoa: first Pietro Jacomo and Aurelia, the usurping Duke and Duchess, and then Mendoza, who subsequently undermines their hold on power.

John Marston's representation of courtly intrigue and usurpation, however, bears the marks of a kind of play "writ in choice Italian" (*Hamlet*, 3.2.240) but significantly different from *The Murder of Gonzago* or *The Mousetrap*, as Hamlet variously identifies his selection for the evening entertainment at Elsinore. The play within the play in *Hamlet* reflects the tragic action whose pattern defines the work in which it is embedded. *The Malcontent* decisively diverges from that pattern. Marston dedicated this play to Ben Jonson, his former enemy in the notorious War of the Theaters, which occurred only a few years before the first production of *The Malcontent* and which *Hamlet* itself mentions in the remarks of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about why the players have abandoned the city and gone on tour. In his dedication Marston labeled it *asperam*

banc suam thalian (this his bitter comedy). This Latin tag signals what the entry of this play in the Stationers' Register confirms by identifying *The Malcontent* as a tragicomedy: it is a conscious experiment in a genre recently the subject of literary debate in Italy. At the center of that noteworthy controversy stood Battista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1590), a work whose popularity Jonson himself indicates through a speech of Lady Politic Would-Be's in *Volpone* (1605). This fatuous English tourist has previously claimed familiarity with the entire Italian canon of vernacular masters by asserting, quite simply, "I have read them all" (3.4.81). But when she mentions Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, despite Volpone's exasperation with her incessant chatter, she becomes even more expansive:

All of our English writers,
I mean such as are happy in th'Italian,
Will deign to steal out of this author, mainly;
Almost as much, as from Montaignié:
He has so modern, and catching a vein,
Fitting the time, and catching the court ear.
(3.4.87–92)

The Malcontent abounds in borrowings from *Il Pastor Fido* that echo both the Italian original and the 1602 "Dymocke" translation into English. Moreover, the play employs the *de casibus* pattern to signal how its plot comes to rest at a station in the turning of Fortune's wheel well after the low point in that cycle characteristic of tragic endings. It is a tragedy with a happy ending such as the Italian playwright and theorist Giraldo Cinthio had composed and described in the mid-cinquecento; and it follows the pattern of pastoral tragicomedy such as Guarini had defended in his debates with Giason Denores in the 1580s and 1590s, and ultimately codified in his *Compendio della poesia tragicomica* attached to the 1602 Italian edition of *Il Pastor Fido*.

Despite its extensive borrowings from Guarini, however, *The Malcontent* is by no means a pastoral play in its setting. It takes place exclusively at Court and thus reflects, through the jaundiced eye of its railing protagonist, Malevole, the satirical or hard-pastoral mode of the mixed genre of tragicomedy rather than the soft-pastoral mode. These options within this hybrid kind were memorably pictured on the title-page of Ben Jonson's *Works* (1616), where a satyr and a shepherd flank the figure of Tragicomedy to indicate this genre's characteristic range of modes. Bosola, who is introduced as "[t]he only court-gall" in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1.1.23), embodies such a satirical perspective within this Italianate tragedy of Webster's; but Malevole's mordant commentary in *The Malcontent* occurs within a sequence of events leading to his restoration to the duchy of Genoa, which thus constitutes the *lieto fine* (happy ending) of a clearly tragicomic alloy.

The drive toward such merging of genres is audible in Guarini's immediate model and inspiration for *Il Pastor Fido*, Tasso's *Aminta* ([1580] 1994). There the poet's alter ego, Tirsi, reveals how his efforts in heroic poetry have influenced him to include elements of that genre in his pastoral piping: "my humble pipe does not sing as before; but with a loftier and more sonorous voice, emulous of the trumpets, it fills the woods" (1.2.641–3). The instruments (pipe and trumpet) represent generic codes (pastoral and epic, respectively) that had increasingly become intelligible signals of poetic kinds – as had the locale (the woods), which distinguishes pastoral in its "satiric" mode. For example, in Tasso's most famous passage of literary theorizing, when he aims to express the variety-in-unity or *discordia concors* that heroic poetry should aim to achieve, as Spenser does in *The Faerie Queene*, he employs a sort of geography of

literary kinds that cover the globe, which thus amounts to a single site containing a multiplicity of significant landscapes (Rhu 1993, 130–1).

Italian tragicomedy influenced English dramatists to undertake a variety of experiments in this generic hybrid, and this mixed kind has sometimes served critics to help decipher the diverse signals sent by those works of Shakespeare's belatedly termed "problem plays" and "romances." In a late play like *The Winter's Tale*, the language of place has become especially expressive, and Shakespeare puts it to noteworthy uses in the shifting scenes of that so-called romance as they range from Sicilia to Bohemia and back, and from court to coast and pasture before returning to court. In the midst of tragic developments at Leontes' Court, Shakespeare also introduces a brief evocation of the serene and beneficent "isle" of Delphos in telling contrast to the scene being played out in Sicilia and as a harbinger of alternative outcomes.

Moreover, *The Winter's Tale* stands as the final Shakespearean investigation of erotic jealousy in a sequence that runs the gamut of genres, beginning with the comedy *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598) and recurring in tragic form in *Othello* (1602). Both of these plays also derive in significant part from Italian *novelle*, a type of generally realistic narrative often fraught with lurid crime and sexual intrigue that nourished an English audience's appetite for sensational stories associated with Italian settings. John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, which recounts details from an actual episode that took place during the cinquecento, ultimately derives from a story in Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (1554). This same collection of tales, along with an alternate version in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532), supplied Shakespeare with the Hero and Claudio plot in *Much Ado*.

Erotic jealousy in such plays as *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale* also provided Shakespeare with a means of representing the existential depths of the most far-reaching philosophical development in early modern thought, the emergence of skepticism, even before its full articulation in the work of René Descartes (Cavell 2003, 7–12, 15–17). Standard accounts of this development in intellectual history attribute its origins, in significant part, to the circulation, in the 1560s, of the writings of Sextus Empiricus (c.200 CE). The fresh accessibility of these major texts of Pyrrhonian skepticism coincided with the widespread struggle for unquestionable criteria in the interpretation of the Bible that preoccupied reformers and their opponents who defended the traditional authority of the Church of Rome. At the beginning of the modern age, radical doubt about the most basic assumptions of European culture increasingly occasioned a shaking of the foundations on which that culture had been built (see Popkin 1979; Larmore 1992). In the skeptical line, Montaigne is the chief Continental thinker whose writings undeniably influenced English Renaissance dramatists like Shakespeare and Marston and their contemporaries. Indeed, John Florio, who translated Montaigne's *Essays* into English (1603), enjoyed the patronage of the Earl of Southampton, whose beneficence had also seen Shakespeare through hard times when the theaters were closed due to the plague in 1592–3.

The evolution of skepticism from Montaigne to Descartes entails what intellectual historians call an epistemological crisis and a paradigm shift (see MacIntyre 1977). In other words, ways of knowing and models of understanding altered drastically during this period when the modern age came into being. Cavell links this development to English Renaissance drama in the following manner:

Nietzsche thought the metaphysical consolation of tragedy was lost when Socrates set *knowing* as the crown of human activity. And it is a little alarming, from within the conviction that the medium of drama which Shakespeare perfected also ended with him, to think that Bacon and Galileo and Descartes were contemporary with those events. We will hardly say that it was *because* of the development of the new science and the establishing of epistemology as the monitor of philosophical

inquiry that Shakespeare's mode of tragedy disappeared. But it may well be that the loss of presentness – which is what the disappearance of that mode of tragedy means – is what works us into the idea that we can save our lives by knowing them. This seems to be the message both of the new epistemology and of Shakespeare's tragedy themselves. (2003, 93–4)

The message of the new epistemology was an optimistic one, promising a mastery of self and world that boded well for the future it envisioned. Although such a sanguine outlook would soon encounter disenchantments of its own with which to contend, Descartes evidently did experience some relief by coming up with a cogent proof of his own existence. But the agons undergone by figures like Lear and Othello, whose relentless demands for demonstrations of love and fidelity lead to catastrophe, express the darker side of the quest for knowledge in early modernity. As we can see in *Hamlet* and Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveler*, English Renaissance tragedy achieved its greatest expressive powers in a period of radical disenchantment with the high hopes of early humanists. Using the very instruments that humanism itself had made available – classical models in literature and rhetorical training in composition – tragic drama on the English Renaissance stage marked unforgettably the occasion both of its own passing and of the passing of the culture that had provided the conditions necessary for this unique dramatic achievement.

In *The Tempest*, the latest play for which we can confidently claim Shakespearean authorship throughout, we encounter a distinct reminiscence of Faustus, the overreaching magus of Wittenberg, in the figure of Prospero. But the passions of the mind cause this Italian scholar to lose his dukedom, not his soul; and he ultimately averts tragedy by tempering revenge with forgiveness. The mitigated skepticism of Montaigne also pervades this tragedy. It is present, for example, in the utopian fantasy of Gonzalo that draws explicitly on Montaigne's "Of Cannibals." This essay's adaptation of a native American perspective on European culture demonstrates the relativism already pushed to extremes by the supreme humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, in *The Praise of Folly*. In his debate with Luther over freedom of the will, skepticism, which (Erasmus claimed) could become an occasion of faith by its exposure of the limits of human understanding, was deemed by the German reformer an inadequate premise in an argument for accepting the authority of the Church of Rome. Having witnessed the bloodshed of religious warfare in which late sixteenth-century France was awash, Montaigne arrived at a comparable conclusion. Shakespeare, moreover, appealed to Montaigne at the moment of crisis in *The Tempest*, when revenge yields to forgiveness and a potential tragedy is transformed by a happy ending.

However, once the spirit of radical doubt had been unleashed, chaos, such as Othello fears, could indeed come again and not be contained by such yieldings of passion to restraint as Prospero's. Descartes entertains hyperbolic doubt precisely because it is the undeniable threat of extreme skepticism which he feels forced to confront. In doing so he echoes the circumstances that Prospero readily calls to mind and easily dispels with serene mastery in soothing the disturbances of Ferdinand's senses, which were startled by the sudden disappearance of the masque performed to celebrate his betrothal to Miranda.

"There may indeed be those who would prefer to deny the existence of a God so powerful, rather than believe that all other things are uncertain," Descartes opines in "Meditation 1." But, he continues, "at the end I feel constrained to confess that there is nothing in all that I formerly believed to be true, of which I cannot in some measure doubt" ([1637] 1996, 61). Suppose it is all just dream, to put it bluntly and prosaically. That is the premise that Prospero encourages Ferdinand to accept, not about art but about life, and that is the question Descartes forces himself to face in the *Meditations*. The interaction between Continental and English culture in many ways helps to produce such gestures of mind and imagination on the English Renaissance stage.

NOTES

- 1 All Shakespeare quotes are from Greenblatt et al. (2002).
 2 All quotes from Marlowe, Marston, Jonson, and Webster are from Bevington et al. (2002).
 3 All translations from Castiglione and Tasso are mine.

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Medieval and Reformation Roots

Raphael Falco

Theater historian Glynne Wickham some time ago complained that “where common sense tells us that Shakespeare and his contemporaries reaped the harvest of the seed, tilth and growth of preceding centuries, most modern criticism, with its heavy literary bias, has in fact severed Elizabethan drama from its roots” ([1959–72] 1981, 1: xxi–xxii; cf. Weimann and Schwarz 1978, xxii). Wickham’s point is well taken in regard to the theatrical significance of the early drama, as is his forceful statement that “the public theatres of Elizabethan London were the crowning glory of the medieval experiment” (xxvii). He is referring to the open stage which was superseded by the stage of the proscenium arch and perspective scenes, “translated,” as Wickham says, from “an old theater of poetry and visual suggestion . . . into a new one of pictorial realism and prose” (xxvii). But this very translation, this newfangledness, makes the term “roots” misleading in the context of medieval and Reformation drama in England. “Roots” suggest a definite course of development, an organic link between earlier and later growth. The metaphor implies a subterranean quality and a promise of ongoing nourishment, while it is impossible to dissociate the idea of roots from the notion of belonging to and flourishing in a native soil. But, as division among critics continues to reveal, all of these associations are problematic when we analyze the relationship between the drama before and after 1580 (more or less). Wickham is surely right to object to heavy literary bias in criticism of the medieval drama, but literary bias is difficult to avoid when reading backward from Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and others whose work became the standard by which literary-dramatic criteria were set.

Medieval theater was neither childlike nor primitive, but in fact highly sophisticated (cf. Twycross 1994, 37). Yet that sophistication is manifest in modes of artistry – from open staging to pageantry to characterological abstraction – less appreciated in the post-Marlovian theater. As Katie Normington puts it, “The plethora of dramatic events in the Middle Ages has provided critics with a problem of how to categorise them” (2004, 1); she notes in the same passage that Wickham, in an effort to characterize the “dramatic events” of the period, “separates them into

three fields, that of worship, recreation and lastly commerce,” with inevitable overlap. Critics have traditionally focused on the religious aspect of the medieval drama, its liturgical origins, for instance, or the ongoing production of the mystery plays. According to Normington, in fact, “the most startling feature of the mystery plays is their longevity. Evidence suggests that performances might have started from as early as 1376, and shows they continued for 200 years” (4). Often overlooked in charting the secularization of these plays – the branching from medieval into Reformation roots – has been the organic quality of the transformation, what John Cox contrasts to the so-styled evolutionary process: “change,” according to Cox, “seems to have been more like the result of a geological cataclysm in biological evolution, with the factors causing it being contingent and unpredictable” (2000, 108). There’s much to be said for Cox’s sense of the plurality, even multicausality, of the transformations of medieval drama into the literary-performative-improvisational theater of Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, Shakespeare, and Jonson. It may be that “literature” as we conceive it, like “religious drama,” must be defined not by its linear development but by its interdependence on cultural norms, thus making a strictly evolutionary course appear artificial.

Yet the misconception, or misprision, regarding the different kinds of medieval dramatic events is not recent and continues to force invidious comparisons. The pedigree for such comparisons is long and distinguished. We find evidence of it throughout the Elizabethan period. Although the mystery plays were suppressed by the Elizabethan regime, secular drama began to find a footing. But the path was strewn with negative evaluations. Philip Sidney’s objections in the *Defence of Poesy* ([1595] 1989) are probably the most familiar examples of a burgeoning literary bias among English intellectuals. “Our comedies and tragedies (not without cause cried out against),” he says, “observ[e] rules neither of honest civility nor skilful poetry” (65). He singles out one play only, *Gorboduc*, which he considers above the common run. But his praise is very faint indeed: “notwithstanding as it is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, ... in truth ... [it] is very defectuous in the circumstances” – that is, in the Aristotelian unities of place and action (65). If *Gorboduc* is “defectuous,” much more so are all the rest, according to Sidney. He goes on to castigate the decorum of contemporary plays, always from a literary, neo-Aristotelian perspective: thus he complains “how all their plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns ... with neither decency nor discretion, so as neither admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained” (67). There is no doubt that “mongrel tragi-comedy” remained in vogue, as the gravedigger in *Hamlet* or Lear’s fool attest – and we are grateful that it did. But, paradoxically, Sidney’s prejudice has also remained in vogue, both as a basis for literary bias and as a justification for regarding pre-Shakespearean drama as primitive.

Nor was Sidney alone in his prejudice. There is a curious passage in George Puttenham’s *The Art of English Poesy* ([1589] 2007) that reveals a similar attitude, but more subtly, in the form of an evolutionary, historical argument. In a chapter on the ancient theater called “Of the places where their interludes or poems dramatic were represented to the people,” Puttenham claims that “The old comedies were played in the broad streets upon wagons or carts uncovered, which carts were floored with boards and made for removable stages to pass from one street of their towns to another, where all the people might stand at their ease to gaze upon the sights” (125).

This is a description not so much of Greece or Rome as of Tudor England and of the mystery cycles in particular. It seems likely that Puttenham is ascribing the pageant-wagons of the Corpus Christi day festivities, which he might have witnessed as a child, to an earlier theatrical tradition. The parallel between antiquity and older English theater, if we can all it that, suggests

an evolutionary hypothesis: by association, both ancient drama and traditional English drama represent earlier steps in a progressive literary history.

The implication of progress, of primitive roots that develop over time, has stigmatized medieval drama from Puttenham's era to our own. For the last forty or so years, as Wickham's remarks indicate, this problematic view of medieval drama as the early form of Renaissance drama has been a popular topic of discussion among medievalists and theater historians. Literary critics, at least since the publication of David Bevington's *From Mankind to Marlowe* (1962), O. B. Hardison's *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (1965), and V. A. Kolve's *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (1965), have rejected the naive approach, fostered chiefly by E. K. Chambers' *The Medieval Stage* (1903), that saw medieval drama as the embryo or primitive ancestor of Renaissance drama (cf. Emmerson 1988, 23). Chambers propounded an evolutionary thesis of dramatic development from the very early liturgical *Quem quaeritis* to the Corpus Christi cycles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Hardison objected to what he called the "evolutionary analogy" of Chambers' book – the introductory chapter of *Christian Rite* is titled "Darwin, Mutations, and Medieval Drama" – and he proceeded to historicize Chambers himself, linking him to historians and cultural theorists of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, such as E. B. Tylor, Herbert Spencer, T. H. Huxley, and James Frazer. According to Hardison, the teleological character of Chambers' hypothesis has little support in the period, once a wider experience of documents is gained.

Recent scholars have continued to challenge the evolutionary hypothesis and to warn that regarding literary chronology in terms of cause and effect, or as a progression from simple to more complex forms (cf. Hardison 1965, 182), it is necessary to ignore much contemporary manuscript evidence. Such practice can result, as Richard Emmerson has noted, in an elision of the medieval, or in a failure to recognize the continuation of so-called "medieval" drama in the sixteenth century (1988, 33). The secularization of the drama remains a focal point of critical argument, both literary and historical. As Cox observes, however, "the question . . . is not whether drama was secular, but how to evaluate its secularity and how to describe the process of secularization" (2000, 107). He recommends paying attention to the change in representations of stage devils (a very popular contemporary topic). Although he acknowledges that Elizabethan stage devils are less overtly religious in nature, he argues "devils in Protestant plays retain the same kind of moral and spiritual vitality as traditional stage devils . . . and many elements of traditional dramaturgy . . . persisted into the commercial theatres" (107). Cox's maintains that such polarized factors as "traditional religion or . . . the Protestant reaction against traditional religion" (108) had a hand in shaping stage devils in the second half of the sixteenth century.

For his part, John Wasson has rejected Chambers' notion of a chronological progression of dramatic sites from church to marketplace to banqueting hall, which supposedly occurred in tandem with a developmental progression of performers from clergy to folk to professional actors (1997, 35). Although, as Wasson notes, Chambers argued that "all vernacular plays were moved outside for the laity, to be performed in marketplaces, theaters-in-the-round, on pageant wagons, or elsewhere," scholarship has established that "more than half of all vernacular plays of the English Middle Ages and Renaissance were in fact performed in churches" (26). This last fact reminds us that churches did not begin to incorporate pews or stalls until the late sixteenth century, before which the nave was a large open space conducive to dramatic activity (28). But it should also alert us to the coexistence of Renaissance drama and that entity which we insist on referring to as "medieval drama" chiefly because it is associated with ecclesiastical doctrine or folk traditions rather than with neoclassical humanism or narrowly defined courtly conventions

of playing. In actuality, as we will see below, both “medieval” and “Renaissance” are porous boundaries where the drama is concerned, all the more so when we approach the subject from a theatrical rather than a restrictively literary perspective.

In regard to the theatrical perspective, one of the most significant scholarly developments in recent decades has been the massive effort to collect and publish the documents relating to the mystery cycles, each of which is associated with a particular town in England. Known as REED (Records of Early English Drama), this project “aims ‘to find, transcribe, and publish external evidence of dramatic, ceremonial, and minstrel activity in Great Britain before 1642’” (Emmerson 1998, 28). The editors of the York volume note that “no attempt has been made to interpret the documents,” although they admit to a necessarily strict selectivity (Johnston 1979, ix). Moreover, they note the “familiar paradox of all collections of records. Although they are voluminous, they are also fragmentary” (xv). The REED volumes, despite the high quality of the archival scholarship, have raised several questions about the nature of the historical record. Theresa Coletti, for example, has questioned the editorial aims of the REED project from the perspective of New Historicist and cultural studies theories. She is uneasy with notions of historical objectivity, comprehensiveness of dramatic records, and the supposed “neutral quality of evidence” assumed by the REED editors (Coletti 1991; 1990). Coletti’s objections have been vigorously met, however, by Greg Walker (1995) and Peter H. Greenfield (1991), both of whom acknowledge the selective nature of the documentary evidence and its sometimes doubtful relevance to the drama. But both also note the promising value of the material so far collected; and, as Greenfield puts it, even if we can no longer believe in “‘objective’ historical evidence untouched by interpretation . . . the experience of the past decade suggests that REED’s policy of offering accurate transcriptions, selected and presented with a minimum of interpretation has produced a series versatile enough to provide material for our stories despite changes in critical fashion” (1991, 21). The “stories” Greenfield refers to are the literary histories by which scholars explain medieval drama to themselves. How successfully the transcribed documentary evidence will lend itself to accurate interpretations is yet to be seen. A measure of REED’s success, however, is the extent to which the volumes can prevent the imposition of sweeping theories like Chambers’ while at the same time shoring up the fragmentary record against neglect.

Liturgical Seeds

The most commonly used generic designations for medieval drama are liturgical drama, mystery cycle, morality play, saint’s play, and Court or household interlude. Much of this drama, both Latin and vernacular, survives only in fragments of texts, if at all. Some of it, notably the cycle dramas, was not written down to be read by anyone except the performers and therefore was deliberately not preserved. These were literally ephemeral texts, meant for a production to be staged on one day only (although repeated throughout the day and perhaps saved from year to year). The liturgical drama, on the other hand, was preserved in monasteries and used annually and in large measure for the instruction of the monks and clergy, although perhaps with popular edification as a complementary objective.

The earliest evidence of what we would term dramatic activity is the ritual used at the dedication of a church. Chambers claims that it was found in various forms in England from the ninth century onward: The bishop and his procession approach the closed doors of the church from without, but one of the clergy, *quasi latens*, is placed inside. Three blows with a staff are

given on the doors, and the anthem is raised: *Tollite portas, principes, vestras et elevamini, portae aeternales, et introibit Rex gloriae*. From within comes the question, *Quis est iste rex gloriae?* The reply is given, *Dominus virtutum ipse est Rex gloriae*. Then the doors are opened, and as the procession sweeps through, he who was concealed within slips out, *quasi fugiens*, to join the train. It is a dramatic expulsion of the spirit of evil (Chambers 1903, 2: 4). Chambers speaks of the evolution of this dedication ritual into the tropings – also called or tropes or troopers – of the medieval liturgy, which were sung interpolations in the Mass. He posits the subsequent development of these early interpolations into the antiphonal *Quem quaeritis*, which he deemed an Easter trope. The *Quem quaeritis* (“Whom do you seek?”) is an exchange between the three Marys and two angels at the tomb of Jesus, the text of which is derived from the gospels of Matthew (28:1–7) and Mark (16:1–7):

Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, o Christicole?
Ihesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o celicola.
non est hic, surrexit sicut ipse dixit; ite, nuntiate quia surrexit.

[Whom seek you in the tomb, O followers of Christ?
Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O Heaven-Dwellers.
He is not here, he has arisen as he said; go announce that he has arisen.]
(Hardison 1965, 178–9)

This early version of the *Quem quaeritis* comes from a manuscript at St. Gall dating from c.950. Chambers believed that this simple version of the exchange evolved into the more complex versions of the eleventh and following centuries. But here as elsewhere the concept of evolution is problematic, since there may well have been simultaneous development of tropings and other kinds of ceremonial and ritualistic dramatic activity. Hardison in fact insists that “there is not the slightest evidence that the tenth-century liturgists favored the association of the *Quem quaeritis* with the Easter Mass. If anything,” he concludes, “the manuscripts suggest that the *Quem quaeritis* was regarded as an independent composition to be included wherever convenient” (1965, 189). He proves that the version quoted by Chambers and placed in St. Gall is both later and simpler than a Limoges version of 923. Thus the notion of a chronological evolution from simpler to more complex falls apart, leading Hardison to several plausible conclusions in opposition to Chambers and his followers, not least that the *Quem quaeritis* was not a trope at all, but a ceremony sometimes but not necessarily attached to the Mass (198–9). That it eventually emerged as the full dramatic text of the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, used at matins, apparently underscores Hardison’s notion of dramatic independence from the Mass (184).

But perhaps it would be useful at this point to remind ourselves what exactly we mean by drama in the context of the medieval Church. Coletti, in demonstrating the flamboyant centrality of the Digby Mary Magdalene to the medieval drama, notes that “Christian drama in the west begins with the recognition of a lost body,” adding that “the absent body whose revelation marked the turning point for the *Visitatio Sepulchri* furnishes the subject matter of much medieval English drama” (2004, 190). Again, however, the development from Christian drama – the “recognition of a lost body,” however widespread – to secular Elizabethan plays remains blurred, if not utterly obscured by any attempt to show a single root in the *Visitatio Sepulchri* or even in the *Quem quaeritis*. Hardison emphasized that the boundary between religious ritual and drama

posited by Chambers and Karl Young (author of the influential *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 1933) did not exist: “religious drama,” according to Hardison, “was the drama of the early Middle Ages and had been ever since the decline of the classical theater” (1965, viii). More recently, yet in the same vein, Simon Trussler has argued that troping was not intended to create dramatic illusion but to create a “microcosmic version of an enduring macrocosmic reality” (1994, 20). He recommends that troping not be seen as an “embryonic” form of drama that developed in the later medieval period, but rather as evidence that the Church was responding to the “infiltration of more secular demands at every level of life,” and that it sanctioned new kinds of dramatic activity when it recognized that “Christ’s humanity could communicate itself to the laity more readily than his divinity” (20).

It remains to wonder, however, whether in creating a microcosmic version of macrocosmic reality, the Church’s intentions notwithstanding, the anonymous authors of the liturgical tropings could have avoided the simultaneous creation of dramatic illusion. After all, the staging of the scene at the tomb is undeniably a dramatic illusion, regardless of how present and enduring the putative religious truth of the resurrection might have been to the congregational audience. “To the contemporary mind,” as William Tydeman argues, “all worship could be deemed dramatic in character, not least the rite of the Mass, which was written in terms of a divine drama by Amalarius of Metz prior to 850” (1994, 6). Yet Tydeman wonders whether “a combination of sung text and a series of ritual actions [can] be truly regarded as fanning a play, when it is nowhere alluded to us as constituting one and we possess no evidence to suggest that at its inception it was perceived as something separable from the remainder of the liturgy” (6). His answer is equivocal, though he emphasizes that scholars are inclined to agree that clerics created the earliest medieval drama.

Not all early drama was written by clerics, however, even if until the late fifteenth century the drama confined itself to religious subjects. As both Wickham and Trussler have noted, there were two separate kinds of medieval religious drama, that of the “Real Presence” within the liturgy and that of Christ’s humanity in the outside world, the latter, which was written in the vernacular, being the more “imitative” (Trussler 1994, 20). The mystery cycles are the most striking example of this vernacular drama, not least because these elaborate town-centered festivals continued to thrive for two hundred years until outlawed in 1576. Four cycles are fully extant in English: the York cycle, with forty-eight episodes, dating from the last quarter of the fourteenth century; the Towneley cycle (named for the family who owned the text and associated with Wakefield in East Anglia), with thirty-two episodes, including a half-dozen episodes by the so-called “Wakefield master”; the Chester cycle, with twenty-five episodes; and the N-town cycle (“N” from *nomen*, meaning “fill in the blank with your town name”), with forty-two episodes (Trussler 1994, 39; Happé 1999, 35–41). Known to scholars as processional drama, these plays were performed on Corpus Christi Day, the Thursday after Trinity Sunday (between May 21 and June 24). Meg Twycross refers to the cycles as a movable feast (1994, 38), because the individual plays were repeated serially at different sites throughout a town in the course of a very long day. They were played on large pageant-wagons, or floats, that could be pulled to as many as forty sites. These wagons could be two or three stories high and varied in shape, made to look like ships or Jesse trees or a stable (as in one of the rare pictures we have of the 1615 Triumphs of Isabella in Brussels) (Happé 1999, 49). The subjects of the plays were drawn from Judeo-Christian history; thus we find plays on the Creation, the Last Judgment, Noah and the flood, the Nativity of Christ, the Resurrection, the Harrowing of Hell, and so forth. Plays were sponsored

by various guilds, such as the Plasterers, Tilers, Bricklayers, Bakers, Coopers, Innkeepers, Cordwainers, or Glovers, who also supplied most of the performers. Professional actors and minstrels also participated, as the REED volumes have shown.

The assessment of women's roles as performers has been difficult, if not controversial, in regard to the REED project. There are no eyewitness accounts and the expectations of women's social and sexual decorum prevented active participation. In fact, according to Normington, "there is little evidence which suggests that women in England spoke during their performances at social, civic, and church events" (2004, 53). Nevertheless, women conducted or participated in the complex spectatorship discourse of the pageant plays, and moreover were permitted under certain circumstances to dance (and were fined if exceeding civic regulations for decorum in those circumstances). Further, the pageants were supported by "'pageant silver' collected from guild membership and fines. Women who achieved guild membership as *femmes soles* contributed directly to this fund" (Normington 2004, 52, 45–7). Thus, while muzzled in terms of public speaking, it would seem that women interlocked in significant ways with the machinery of the mystery cycles.

Like all religious drama, the processional plays were meant to instruct the audience and also to celebrate glorious moments in putatively sacred history. The audience included members of the clergy and the aristocracy as well as middle-class burgesses and peasants, all gathered in the streets for the holiday festival (Kolve 1966, 6–7). Wealthy citizens might pay to have a staging site placed in front of their house, so that they could watch with their friends, perhaps from an upper window (Twycross 1994, 48). Because the plays were repeated at different sites throughout the town, the number of spectators was kept to a reasonable size, probably no more than one hundred people at each staging. Nevertheless it would have been difficult for everyone to see everything happening on the lower stages of the pageant-wagons or of the open-air place and scaffold stages; the upper stories would have afforded better views, as would the scaffolds on the open air platea stage (Twycross 1994, 60). No doubt many of the townspeople would have known players from the guilds, increasing the audience's interest in the production. In the absence of amplification, or of an enclosed theatrical space, actors depended on their voices. In contrast to audiences for morality plays or courtly entertainments, which would have been both more homogeneous and more stable, the audiences for processional drama were free to come and go, and probably viewed the plays out of sequence (Carpenter 1997, 3).

The writing varies widely in the extant mystery cycle texts, as might be expected with multiple authorship, and the dramatization or expansion of biblical episodes ranges from the banal to the inspired. The most acclaimed work is that of the anonymous author of the Wakefield Group, whose six plays in the N-Town cycle display, in A. C. Cawley's words, "a lively use of gesture and action, an outspoken criticism of contemporary abuses, a bold rehandling of secular material for comic purposes, and an unusual skill in characterization" (1958, xx). In the *Mactacio Abel*, for instance, Cain is selfish and profane, an impious ingrate whose murder of his brother comes after the audience has had ample proof of Cain's deviant attitude. The expansion of the meager passage from Genesis contains historical anomalies meant undoubtedly to suggest contemporary life, such as the presence of Garcio, Cain's servant, and the entrance of Cain behind a plough-team: the first is problematic since Garcio would also have had to be a brother (or some close kin), while the second, the technologically advanced existence of a plough and team, is absurd. But these anomalies link the story

to the present day, adducing identifiable realities to the cryptic outcome of the brothers' sacrifices to Yahweh; the burnt offerings are in fact referred to in the play as "tithesheaves," yet another familiarizing detail. Abel warns his brother to tithe correctly (the word for tithe is "teyn" or "tend"):

Abell Cayn, thou tendys wrang, and of the warst.
Cayn We! com nar, and hide myne een!
 In the wenyand, wist ye now at last!
 Or els will thou that I wynk?
 Then shall I doy no wrong, me thynk.
 [Finishes counting with his eyes closed
 Let me se now how it is – [Opens his eyes
 Lo, yit I hold me paide
 I teyndyd wonder well bi ges
 And so euen I laide.
Abell Came [Cayn], of God me thynke thou has no drede.
Cayn Now and he get more, the dwell me spedel –
 As mych as oone reepe –
 For that cam hym full light chepe
 Not as mekill, grete ne small
 As he myght wipe his ars withall.
 For that, and this that lyys here
 Haue cost me full dere
 Or it was shorne, and broght in stak
 Had I many a wery bak.
 Therfor aske me no more of this
 For I haue giffen that my will is.

(ll. 224–44)

Despite the oppressively normative interpretation of the biblical scene, the Wakefield author manages to create a very human Cain who looks out for himself while coarsely suggesting what the deity can use his sacrifice for. His language is that of the churl, familiar and probably amusing to the local audience, while at the same time recognizably inappropriate.

The earthiness of the language in the *Mactacio Abel* is not unusual. Many of the vernacular plays of the period contain obscenity and profane speech, although, judging from extant material, it was more prevalent in the morality plays than in the mystery cycles. This earthy language may serve as a technique of negative characterization, but it also connects the artificial stage language with the spoken language of the day. The drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries probably owes a genuine debt to this license with dramatic speech. Roman and Greek drama supplied the models for both the exalted language of tragic figuration and also, through Plautus in particular, for the vulgar tongue of comedy. But, whereas the language of tragedy had no homegrown equivalent, comic speech had English sources as well: Chaucer, the fabliau tradition, and the vernacular drama. The clowns of the Renaissance stage, even when they are meant to duplicate Roman antecedents, are obvious imports from the medieval stage. They simultaneously represent the vulgar and the theatrical past. If we can speak of roots at all, then the linguistic license of medieval and Reformation drama merits the term: the raw obscenity of such plays as *Mankind* is detectable behind not only such early Elizabethan plays as *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1575) but also the more restrained

vulgarisms of many later works written for the public theater, from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602) to *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607).

The morality plays tended to be written for Court or by schoolmasters for their students to perform (Wasson 1997, 28). These plays might have been staged in open air performances in fixed locations using “place and scaffold” construction that afforded a large space for action; or they might have been performed indoors in the halls of great houses or in college halls; it was even possible that some morality plays might have been performed by itinerant actors in what Peter Happé calls “unlocalized impromptu” staging (1999, 48). The Macro collection (named for the Reverend Cox Macro, a late seventeenth-century antiquarian) contains three of the five surviving fifteenth-century texts: *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, and *Wisdom*. The other two plays are *The Pride of Life*, which is fragmentary, and *Everyman*, which is now thought to be a translation from the Dutch play *Elckerlijc*, “one of hundreds of surviving Rederijkers’ (rhetoricians’) plays, which were encouraged and supported in the low countries by local Chambers of Rhetoric from the second quarter of the fifteenth century until the beginning of the seventeenth” (Coldewey 1993, 43). Characterization in the moralities is broad and allegorical, with figures like Fellowship, Mind, Lucifer, Will, Mercy, Mischief, and Mankind. The action – mostly conversational – is obviously didactic and characters’ speeches tend to be explanatory. Thus in *Mankind* the eponymous protagonist enters (carrying a spade) and announces:

My name ys Mankynde. I have my composycyon
 Of a body and of a soull, of condycyon contrarye.
 Betwyx them tweyn ys a grett dyvisyon;
 He that shulde be subjecte, now he hath the victory.
 Thys ys to me a lamentable story
 To se my flesch of my soull to have governance.
 Wher the goodewyff ys master, the goodeman may be sory.
 I may both syth and sobbe, this ys a pytuose remembrance.
 (ll. 194–201)

The play’s agon is here revealed, and the action develops around the resolution of Mankind’s “condycyon contrarye.” The metaphor of the wife as master over the husband represents the imbalance between the carnal and the spiritual in Mankind himself. That the metaphor is sexist goes without saying, but it is nonetheless indicative of the author’s attempt to link the human “composycyon” to the composition of society. This underscores the palpably social character of the morality drama, its pointed didacticism, and its presumed value as an application in daily life. The allegorical quality of the characterization alienates the play from post-Marlovian drama; rather, it seems a precursor of *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

We should be careful, however, not to separate the morality tradition from later drama. As David Bevington notes, “almost all pre-Marlovian plays of the sixteenth century which bear convincing evidence of popular commercial production are in fact moralities or hybrids” (1962, 10). William Wager’s *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* ([1569] 1967), for example, calls itself “A Very Merry and Pithy Comedy” and cites Aristophanes in the first line of the Prologue. But the characters are straight from the morality tradition: for instance, Moros, Discipline, Piety, Exercitation, Wrath, Fortune, and Ignorance, among others. The main character is Moros (“fate” or “destiny” in Greek), over whose behavior there is a struggle between the good and the bad characters. The play contains an interesting insight into characterization, as well as a series of lugubriously instructive speeches. The complex character Fortune, enraged, berates Incontinence

who claims to have “nuzzled [Moros] in carnality” (l. 1071). Incontinence begins to leave the stage when Fortune enters; Fortune asks “Are you blind? Am I so little a mote that you cannot see?” (ll. 1086–7). Incontinence, alarmed, asks for mercy, to which Fortune replies:

Well, at this time I hold you excused,
 Glad to see you do your duty so well.
 If all other had themselves so used,
 It had been better for them, to you I may tell.
 I trow your name is Incontinency,
 One of the properties of Moros.

(ll. 1094–9)

The notion that the other characters, both good and bad, are properties of Moros is a remarkable insight. It reflects a fundamentally different concept of dramatic representation from that which we encounter in the more naturalistic conceptualizations of late Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. We would never think of asking whether Ophelia is a property of Hamlet, or Bosola of Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*, and undoubtedly literary bias persuades us to see even partial naturalism as more advanced than allegory, or than the “property-ism” of Wager’s play. Yet, at the level of abstraction *The Longer Thou Livest* is both playful and sophisticated. Like the bulk of the morality tradition, the messages are all very clear. The dramatization serves less to advance the plot than to increase awareness of the reality of abstract principles in daily life. Thus Wager’s figure called Discipline can lecture Moros simultaneously on piety and on Piety, the character or “property” of Moros himself:

Piety will teach you your duty to kings,
 To rulers and magistrates in their degree,
 Unto whom you must be obedient in all things
 Concerning the statutes and laws of the country.
 It is piety your parents to obey,
 Yea, your prince and country to defend,
 The poor to comfort ever as you may,
 For the truth’s sake your blood to spend.

(ll. 441–8)

According to the stage directions, Moros should “between every sentence say ‘Gay gear,’ ‘good stuff,’ ‘very well,’ ‘fin-ado,’ with such mockish terms.” The mockery dramatizes Moros’ dubious moral condition, while the speech plainly outlines the social value of piety to the right functioning of the rigid hierarchy of degree. The dialogue admits no question about Discipline’s veracity; his sententiousness is not ridiculous and Moros’ mockery seems drastically wrong.

In contrast, we might think of Polonius’ sententiousness, more or less naturalized by Shakespeare and thereby made ridiculous. The morality tradition (including the hybrid moralities) thrives in abstraction rather than naturalistic characterization. Even within the tradition, however, there is a difference between symbolic names and full personification. John N. King concludes that there is a distinction between the medieval use of personification, such as that found in *Everyman* or *The Castle of Perseverance*, and the Reformation practice of assigning what he calls “generic type names” (1982, 284). The characters in *The Longer Thou Livest* seem to fall into the second category. As properties of Moros, they are not full personifications, nor are they quite the same as such figures as Ben Jonson’s Lady Would-Be, or Everill and his characters based on the humors.

But we should be wary here. To see the generic type-names as constituting a transitional status of characterization courts the danger of seeing sixteenth-century dramatic development as strictly evolutionary. As we noted in discussing Chambers (1903), this sort of naive evolutionism can distort our analysis. It would be better to recognize the Reformation practice as a viable alternative form of characterization; and it would be better not to transmute chronology into evolutionary development, but rather to recognize parity among medieval, Reformation, and Renaissance styles of characterization. The use of personification or type-names changes the dramatic effect, yet the range of responses evoked is equally wide, if not always as subtle, as that of more naturalistic characterization. For example, whereas the morality tradition is by no means humorless, its humor too is abstracted and laden with meaning (usually negative). It is tempting to call such abstraction (or such humor) primitive, or transitional, but we should resist doing so. If, as literary-minded critics, we were to neglect the theatrical power of symbolic abstraction, we would be committing the same error as those who deem Cycladic sculpture or African art “primitive.”

After Morality

Although humanist practices, specifically in regard to revival of the Greek and Roman classics, made little impact on the morality tradition (despite a seasoning of Latin) until the sixteenth century, interludes performed at great houses and at courts began turning to classical models in England by the end of the fifteenth century. The term interlude is very slippery: as F. P. Wilson and G. K. Hunter observe, it might mean either “a play (*ludus*) conducted between (*inter*) two or more actors or a play performed between the courses of a banquet” (1969, 10). Henry Medwall’s *Fulgens and Lucrez*, a secular English comedy acted in 1491 and printed by John Rastell between 1512 and 1516, is called an interlude, as is his *Nature*. It is the former play, however, which is of interest as unique in fifteenth-century England. Whereas *Nature* traces the course of human life, recording the struggle between virtue and vice in the morality tradition, *Fulgens and Lucrez* is the earliest secular drama to have survived (Wilson and Hunter 1969, 6–7). The play takes the form of a Ciceronian debate. The topic of the debate is nobility, whether birth or merit makes a noble human being. A popular topic (even Chaucer takes it up), the nobility question will be raised with gusto by later writers from Castiglione to Ben Jonson. Although, as Wilson and Hunter suggest (1969, 8), we should resist calling Medwall a humanist, his play reflects the thematic secularity and the classical turn of much later writing which we routinely term humanist.

The main plot of Medwall’s play is drawn from Buonaccorso da Montemagno’s Latin treatise *De vera nobilitate* (1428), which had been translated into English by John Tiptoft and printed by William Caxton in 1481. The play is clearly a household drama which would have been presented during the course of a banquet in a great hall (Nelson 1980, 2; Happé 1999, 110). There is a possibility that Thomas More, as a teenage page in the house of Thomas Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, might have acted in *Fulgens and Lucrez* in a subordinate role. Set in ancient Rome, the play dramatizes Lucrez’ choice between two suitors, the wealthy patrician Publius Cornelius and the commoner Gaius Flaminius. That she should be permitted to choose is itself extraordinary, and her choice of the commoner Gaius Flaminius stands conventional expectation on its ear. As one character puts it:

What? Will they afferme that a chorles son
Sholde be more noble than a gentilman born?
Nay, beware, for men wyll have thereof grete scorn.
(ll. 130–2)

Fulgens, Lucre's father, justifies his permissiveness regarding his daughter's right to choose with biblical authority. Somewhat surprisingly, not least because the play is set in Rome, he paraphrases 1 Corinthians 12, Saint Paul's discussion of the nine charisms of the congregation of Christ. Fulgens' speech is a translation of the Vulgate:

To some he lendith the sprete of prophecy,
 To some the plenty of tongues eloquence,
 To some grete wisdom and worldly policy,
 To some litterature and speculatyf science,
 To some he geveith the grace of premyence
 In honour and degree, and to some abundance
 Of tresoure, riches, and grete inheritance.
 Every man oweth to take gode hede
 Of this distribution, for who so doth take
 The larger benefite, he hath the more nede
 The larger recompense and thank therfor to make.
 (ll. 210–20)

In addition to editing the original charisms – "litterature and speculatyf science" are particularly newfangled – Fulgens folds honor and degree into a socialized utopian ethos. The distribution of various privileges and powers makes for a somewhat complacent view of social stratification. Yet Fulgens, an aristocrat, is more accepting of Lucre's choice than the play's common characters.

Fulgens and Lucre includes a subplot, not derived from Buonaccorso, in which characters designated A and B pursue Ancilla, Lucre's maid. The subplot is typically comic, full of mishaps, beatings, and rambunctious language. It seems at once Chaucerian and proto-Elizabethan in its spirited jests and confusions. It should be noted too that *Fulgens and Lucre* includes a play-within-a-play, or what might be termed a mumming-within-a-mumming.

Other secular plays soon followed *Fulgens and Lucre*. John Rastell's *Four Elements* (1517), *Calisto and Melebea* (1523), *Gentleness and Nobility* (1523), and John Skelton's *Magnyfycence* (1519) all appeared within a decade of the printing of Medwall's play. *Magnyfycence* takes up the subject of kingship in a political allegory, concentrating on the cardinal virtue of *fortitudo* in rulers. The play might be seen in the *speculum principii* or perhaps *de casibus* tradition, concerned as it is in demonstrating the dangers of bad advisors to a king. In addition, Skelton draws on the French *sotie* (fool's play) tradition and introduces fools to the English stage (Happé 1999, 113). John Heywood's plays also began appearing at this time: *Witty and Witless*, *The Pardoner and the Friar*, *The Four PP*, *Johan Johan*, *The Play of the Weather*, and *A Play of Love*. Thomas Warton said of Heywood, who was Rastell's son-in-law, that he was "among the first of our dramatists who drove the Bible from the stage, and introduced representations of familiar life and popular manners" (Wilson and Hunter 1969, 27–8). This is a bit overstated insofar as the Bible provided many subjects for Reformation dramatists; and, while it is true that morality plays avoided "familiar life and popular manners," some of the mystery plays, as we noted above, deliberately exploited familiar practices to drive home their instructional message. Yet Heywood is noteworthy for his lively wit and for his probable debt to French farce, the latter of which reflects the incipient dependence of English literary culture on Continental models. His plays are mostly structured as disputations or debates, more sophisticated in language than *Fulgens and Lucre* and complicated by more characters taking part.

The Bible was certainly not driven from the English stage, unless we take “the stage” in the narrow sense and apply it only to the public theaters. Not only were there translations of religious plays, such as Arthur Golding’s of Theodore Beza’s *Abraham Sacrifiant*, but there were also many native works on biblical themes. Once the Reformation gathered strength, religious drama – that is, Protestant drama – flourished, and biblical themes appear throughout the period in Latin and vernacular plays. Perhaps the days of the old mystery plays were numbered because of their papish content; and perhaps liturgical drama, which continued well beyond the banning of the mystery cycles, lost its dramatic primacy. But the Reformation dramatists of the mid-sixteenth century, as King has noted, “passed on . . . the themes and conventions of the early moral interlude in a form suitable for adaptation by the Elizabethan dramatists” (1982, 272). King considers *Doctor Faustus* “the last avowedly religious drama in Renaissance England” and, citing Bevington, he concludes that “the achievement of Marlowe and his contemporaries springs from their synthesis of new secular subjects with traditional doubling patterns and the psychomachia form of the medieval morality play and Tudor moral interlude” (272–3).

Religious dramatists included George Buchanan, tutor to James VI (later James I of England) and sometimes called the best Anglo-Latin poet of the century, who wrote the Latin tragedy *Baptistes sive Calumnia* (1541). The clerics John Bale, John Foxe, William Baldwin, Nicholas Udall, and Nicholas Grimald all wrote plays. Udall in fact wrote the secular *Ralph Roister Doister* while also editing and translating religious texts (King 1982, 275). John Bale wrote many plays in both Latin and in English on Protestant themes. Most of the plays are heavily didactic, overburdened by the religious controversies of the day. In *King Joban*, for example, the title character (who is a man) speaks with the female allegorical figure, Englande:

<i>K. Joban</i>	say forth thy mynd now
	And show me how thow art thus becum a wedowe.
<i>Englande</i>	Thes vyle popych swyne hath clene exyled my hosband.
<i>K. Joban</i>	Who ys thy husbond? Tell me, good gentyll Yngland.
<i>Englande</i>	For soth, God hym selfe, the spowse of every sort
	That seke hym in fayth to ther sowlys helth and confort.
<i>Sedicdyon</i>	He ys scant honest that so may wyfes wyll have.
<i>K. Joban</i>	I saye hold yowre peace and stond asyde lyke a knave!
	ls God exylyd owt of this regyon? Tell me.
<i>Englande</i>	Yea, that he is, ser: yt is much more pete.
<i>K. Joban</i>	How commyth it to passe that he is thus abusyd?
<i>Englande</i>	Ye know he abydyth not where his word ys refusyd.

(ll. 105–16)

The intertwining of the political and the religious, as well as hostility toward Catholicism, are typical of Bale’s plays. The old religious metaphor of marriage – Christ wed to the Church, the bishop to his diocese, the wife to the husband – gains a chauvinistic dimension in *King Joban*. While it may be difficult to see an allegory such as this one as a precursor to Shakespearean, or even Marlovian, characterization, we should not underestimate the influence of the allegorical psychomachia, the inner struggle projected onto stage figures. The later dramatists naturalized these projected struggles, creating what we now think of as characterological identity.

Attacks on the theater, the well-documented antitheatrical prejudice, did not begin until the opening of the public theaters in 1576. Until that time – until the physical space became a

threat to morals – even such austere Protestant figures as John Foxe approved of drama. Moreover, contrary to expectations, the pre-public, Protestant drama includes not only religious plays, but also the first comedies in English (King 1982, 277–9). Biblical themes might supply the foundation of such plays as *Nice Wanton* or *Lusty Juventus* or George Gascoigne's *Glass of Government*, one of many prodigal son dramas. But, in contrast to Bale's writing, the matter of these plays tends to be more secular than religious. Indeed, it could even be coarse or scatological, as in the university drama *Gammer Gurton's Needle*.

Prejudice and Public Theater

Prejudice against the theater coincides not only with the opening of the public spaces but also roughly with the increase in Continental influences on English drama. This is a valuable, if somewhat neglected, coincidence. Although it is by no means assured that the Puritan attacks would have been lessened if the drama had retained a more exclusively native tradition, the influx of foreign, ostensibly papist influence probably stoked the antitheatrical fires. In any case, the evidence of Continental influence is clear and abundant. As is well known, the second half of the sixteenth century witnessed an extraordinary efflorescence of generic imitations of classical genres, with literary models drawn from Greece, Rome, Italy, and France. The drama, while never losing touch entirely with native traditions, nonetheless began to complicate its literary genealogy by adopting both ancient and Continental ancestors. The works of the Greek tragedians, Aristophanes, Terence, and Seneca all became available in sixteenth-century editions, in the original languages as well as in English. Italian and French plays were translated, and Continental poetic treatises helped to codify and even to modernize the rules of decorum about which Philip Sidney was so exercised. *Gorboduc*, Sidney's solitary grudging exception to the generally dismal state of English drama, provides a good example of the new Elizabethan trends. While retaining dumb shows not unlike those in the morality and mystery plays, *Gorboduc* is a five-act tragedy in blank verse, an imitation of Italian *intermezzi*, with a chorus and deliberately elevated rhetoric. Norman Rabkin calls it "a sophisticated and self-conscious attempt at native classical drama" (Rabkin and Fraser 1976, 81).

The phrase "native classical drama" says it all. It is both self-contradictory and curiously accurate. The influence of Continental sources such as commedia dell'arte or the French morality tradition, in tandem with the increasingly prevalent acceptance of humanist ideals of classical revival, refashioned the family tree of Elizabethan drama. The idea of English roots, and particularly of national rootedness, became much more complicated. Consequently, any organic connection between, for example, the mystery cycles or the morality plays and Kyd, Marlowe, Shakespeare and their contemporaries is difficult to establish with certainty, as is the exclusively English rootedness of the later Elizabethan theater. Once English writers had begun to feel the influence of humanist pedagogy, they, like their Italian and French contemporaries, grafted themes, techniques, and forms from ancient Greek and Latin authors onto a native (even local) literary tradition. If a play like *Fulgens and Lucrez* already reflects a classical influence, then later works make it nearly impossible to disentangle English from Continental-cum-classical influences. As a result, we are obliged to complicate the notion of rootedness itself, rejecting, as in any other literary history, indefensible ideas of purity and native progress in favor of a more flexible concept of cultural interdependence.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the roots of drama need not be confined to dramatic representation. It can be unduly restrictive to limit ourselves to dramatic roots, particularly in a period so complexly indebted to classical revival and to what might be termed the importation across genres of *materia poetica*. In innumerable works of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from *Magnyfycence* to Marlowe's *Dido, Queene of Carthage*, from Henry Medwall's use of Ciceronian debate to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, authors drew on other-than-dramatic sources. Virgil, Plutarch, and Ovid among the ancients, the Italian and French *novelle* tradition, *The Mirror for Magistrates* – all supplied material for Renaissance drama. Similarly, the Bible continued to be an important source of dramatic themes throughout the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. But it would be fruitless to try to establish whether, for example, Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam, Queene of Jewry* drew more from its biblical source than from Senecan tragedy or from the contemporary closet drama. At the same time we must recognize the growth of interest in authorship and in literary (as opposed to theatrical) practice. In 1616 Ben Jonson published his plays along with his poems in his *Workes*, with the conscious objective of making his works analogous to the collected editions of ancient poets; in 1623 the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays was published. These are patently literary events, canonizing the Author with a capital A, and they stand in striking contrast to the anonymity and practical-theatrical concerns of the medieval drama.

The continuity between medieval and Renaissance drama is both more subtle and more distorted than one expects in a search for sources or roots. Perhaps Puttenham's pageant-wagons, supposedly built in antiquity but in likelihood modeled on local English floats, are more emblematic of the kind of continuity we find between medieval dramatic practice and the Renaissance stage. The older medieval forms do not simply drop away; they undergo a complicated process of integration into the plays of the public theater.

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Popular Culture and the Early Modern Stage

Sophie Chiari and François Laroque

Many Renaissance scholars have presented the adjective “popular” as a cultural category of its own, supposedly endowed with “authenticity,” while the notion of a “popular culture” *per se* remains a rather nominal concept. The term is also somewhat misleading because it conceals, rather than enhances, the great diversity of early modern productions, be they literary or theatrical. It further implies that there existed a clear-cut dichotomy between such opposite cultural spheres as “high” and “low.” In fact, this distinction is quite questionable as the cultural upper classes often meddled with popular culture, while the traditional elements of folk culture were also frequently found in the works of the so-called “University wits.” The hybridity of Renaissance culture in England must therefore be taken into account in order to understand and analyze correctly the place and function of popular culture on the early modern stage. The adjective “popular” is also more or less synonymous with “successful.” To be “popular,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (7.a), is to be “liked or admired by many people,” and it is certainly worth noting that this specific sense dates back at least to the early seventeenth century. This poses the question, addressed at the end of this chapter, of the various possible connections between the uses of “popular” culture on stage and the writing of theatrical successes.

Beyond the unavoidable, structural oppositions among the nobility, the gentry, and the middling and lower classes in a rapidly changing society, the problems posed by the notion of “popular” have recently been foregrounded. They all boil down to one “decisive question: *who speaks and to whom?*” (de Certeau 1997, 125). In other words, is popular culture located in reception (in reading and seeing), or in production (in writing and staging)?

As far as production is concerned, only a handful of writers and playwrights of the period may really be called self-taught. Even Thomas Kyd, who as far as we know did not attend any university, remained probably ten years or so at the Merchant Taylors’ School from 1565 onward, where he learned Latin, Italian, and French. Having thus benefited from some form of education, most English dramatists would then have deliberately included “popular” material in their works so

as to attract wider audiences. Someone like Thomas Dekker, for instance, perfectly embodies the flexibility of the early modern playwright who wrote for the commercial theater while also being commissioned pageants for the Court such as *The Magnificent Entertainment*, a collaborative piece intended for James I's solemn entry into London in 1604. Quite simply, for him, writing for popular audiences was never exclusive of the specific demands of urban and courtly audiences.

Concerning the reception of popular plays, should the high-ranking spectators also be taken into account? Given the specificities of the London playhouse audiences, the answer is probably yes. Commenting on the public theaters of his era and on their tumultuous audiences, John Davies wrote in the 1610s:

For as we see at all playhouse doors,
When ended is the play, the dance, and song,
A thousand townsmen, gentlemen and whores,
Porters and servingmen together throng.
(Davies 1975, 136, qtd. in Wells 2006, 10)

The mingling of social classes is the striking element in Davies' epigram and assuredly, many testimonies of the period usefully remind us that the popular stage was a "flexible platform dramaturgy" (Weimann 1978, 216) that could accommodate a great variety of theatrical modes, all of which emphasized the wealth and range of the English language.

If the heterogeneity of Elizabethan audiences should not be exaggerated or the contradictions inherent in many early modern plays justified, they should not be overlooked either. In England, the Reformation allowed a greater number of people, including women (provided they focused on devotional themes and writings), to have access to education, thus keeping them informed of a number of new ideas, trends, and discoveries. This religious and intellectual movement therefore contributed to the intermingling of the popular and the elite, whose concerns and beliefs were sometimes surprisingly similar. By the mid-sixteenth century, the old religion, which had until then been a source of supernatural aid for rich and poor alike, was gradually replaced by superstition, an enduring source of anxiety for the Church of England. Reginald Scot wrote his skeptical *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) primarily to oppose the old beliefs propagated by the hundred-year-old *Malleus Maleficarum*. He noted with contempt that "In estimation of the vulgar people, [witchcraft] is a supernaturall worke, contrived between a corporall old woman, and a spirituell divell. The maner thereof is so secret, mysticall, and strange, that to this daie there hath never beene any credible witness therof" (472). Yet, Queen Elizabeth herself believed in the obnoxious powers of black magic and she easily associated witches with the darker side of Catholicism. Under her reign, the Witchcraft Act of 1563 allowed authorities to address the public fear of witchcraft by persecuting lonely, destitute old women who were regarded as witches. They were traditional scapegoats in rural communities, who denounced their alleged associations with the devil, causing their numbers to increase dramatically from the mid-sixteenth century onward. Learned demonology (as in Ben Jonson's elaborate *Masque of Queens*, performed at Whitehall in 1609) and witch-lore (as in Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*, written between 1613 and 1616) went hand-in-hand on the London professional stage.

Thus there existed no such thing as a clear-cut opposition between the popular themes presented on the public stages and the more refined topics aimed at a courtly audience; this may account for the fact that in today's definitions of "popular" culture, "the emphasis is on the way

'low' literary genres were produced as signs of the low, rather than functioning as the authentic literary sign system of the 'lower' labouring classes" (O'Callaghan 2009, 50). Courtly and popular plays, far from being poles apart, actually covered common ground. What really differed was the treatment of the subject and, even more so, the way it was received. If a certain kind of distancing – or skepticism – still characterized the overall attitude of the higher classes, then the groundlings responded more spontaneously to what they could see and hear onstage.

Print Culture: The Advent of Literacy

The advent of print culture significantly changed so-called "popular" habits. The development of cheap print literature published in quarto format meant that almanacs and proverbs, just like rogue and murder pamphlets, attracted a wide readership and spilled over into the public theater. Murders and sensational crimes particularly appealed to the popular taste. The clergyman Henry Goodcole, a visitor of Newgate prisoners, wrote several pamphlets describing the activities of notorious criminals, the most famous among them being *The wonderful discoverie of Elizabeth Savvyer a witch late of Edmonton, her conuiction and condemnation and death* (1621). If Reverend Goodcole defended the prisoner whose confessions he recorded, the case of Elizabeth Sawyer was presented in a much more negative way by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford in *The Witch of Edmonton*, a tragicomedy written the same year as Goodcole's criminal biography. While the latter explicitly wrote for a popular readership, *The Witch of Edmonton* was performed both at the Cockpit, a public theater located near Drury Lane, and at Court, where it was apparently well received if one is to believe the title-page of the printed play, published in 1658 ("It was acted by the Prince's Servants, often at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, and once at Court, with singular applause"). Clearly, all and sundry were fascinated by crime and punishment. At the turn of the seventeenth century, the London playhouses used the massive proliferation of *faits divers*. The anonymous domestic tragedy *Arden of Faversham* (1592) capitalized on the story of Arden's murder, which was then something of a national sensation. On February 15, 1551, the former mayor of Faversham, Kent, had been murdered by his wife and her lover. Forty years later, this provided the main plot of a very successful play which, in its turn, spawned a variety of domestic tragedies dealing with real-life instances of bloody crimes among the ordinary English folk, away from the glamorous European royal courts which had so far served as exotic backgrounds for tragedy.

An inventory of the stock of the seventeenth-century London printer Charles Tias, who specialized in low-cost literature, shows that, in 1664, he had "around 90,000 octavo and quarto chapbooks in his shop on London Bridge" (Charlton and Spufford 2002, 38). If anything, such high numbers suggest that there were more literate people in England than is often thought. No wonder almanacs, books of chivalry, or broadside ballads (single-sheet publications easily deciphered), which sold for just a few pennies, seduced readers from humble origins. Chapbooks in particular allowed folks scattered in rural areas to gain access to various literary genres, and some of these certainly influenced the popular stage. The popular versions of the Faust legend contributed, for instance, to shape Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, where they are echoed in the B-Text of the play. Robert Greene wrote *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* with an anonymous Tudor chapbook in mind, *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon* (c.1555). As to popular heroines of chapbooks such as Mary Ambree and Long Meg of Westminster, they were openly mentioned as models by Bess in Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West*, Part I (c.1597–1603):

Methinks I could be valiant on the sudden
 And meet a man i'th'field.
 I could do all that I have heard discours'd
 Of Mary Ambree or Westminster's Long Meg.
 (2.3.10–14)

Though lower-class, these popular heroines were frequently “ennobled by modesty and virtuous love,” and “when the occasion required, [they] disguised themselves as men to engage in high adventure” (Heywood 1968, xiii).

Because the English Reformation strongly encouraged writing and the circulation of print, the enduring oral culture of early modern England joyfully interacted with written forms (Wood 2013, 262). As far as early modern drama is concerned, if the more powerful companies often withheld from print their most successful plays, a number of dramatic texts did find their way to a relatively popular readership through the then fairly lengthy process of publication. As Cyndia Susan Clegg explains, “between 1560 and 1642 printers apparently believed that there was a sufficient number of readers ... interested in drama to warrant regularly printed plays performed ... on the London stage, as well as plays performed only at court” (2006, 24). Interestingly enough, writing plays for an elite audience (or intending them for this type of restricted audience) seems to have provided Shakespeare with a good marketing strategy, since *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *King Lear* were all advertised as Court plays. So, by purchasing the printed plays, popular as well as middle-class readers could imagine that they were then given a privileged access to works first intended for the elite.

Shakespeare was not the only one who mingled popular and aristocratic motifs. John Lyly's Court plays are a case in point. Indeed, if the playwright almost exclusively composed for the Court, then a play like *Galatea* (c.1584) “shares conventions, strategies, and goals with popular drama. Its structure, mythological machinery, and language recall, while pushing beyond, the stage romances, in particular, of the previous decade” (Cartwright 1998, 207). Edward Blount, the publisher of Shakespeare's First Folio (1623), must have kept these strategies in mind when he decided to publish a posthumous edition of Lyly's most famous plays. Far from being deterred by Lyly's reputation as an elitist playwright, Blount, who essentially aimed at making money, sought to connect the late writer to a much broader, less sophisticated audience than had originally been the case. In *Six Court Comedies*, the collection he published in 1632, he boldly advertised the deceased writer's intimate sphere: “when Old John Lilly, is merry with thee in thy Chamber, Thou shalt say, Few (or None) of our Poets now are such witty Companions” (Lyly 1632, sig. A6). Once again, the promise of making courtly drama accessible points to the porous barrier between “low” and “high.” Up to a certain point, successful courtly plays were even “condemned” to become popular, either because they gave way to revised versions for the public theater, or because, once printed, they eventually met with the requirements of a growing book trade attracting an emerging middle class.

Popular Taste, Commercial Habits

Because popular tastes implied a new mass readership, they naturally influenced the dramatic output of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. Not only was there a steady demand for printed plays among the urban, middle-class public, but there was also a specific market for plays with

a “high” cultural status that had proved commercial failures on the stage. The bookseller Walter Burre regularly published such dramatic pieces (Lesser 1999, 22–43). For instance, Francis Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, performed in 1607 by the Children of Blackfriars, was first rejected by its early audiences before being offered a second chance in print, six years later, not least because it dealt with average London citizens. Laced with satiric barbs at the upper classes and quite critical of the middle classes’ taste for romances, Beaumont’s comedy was more likely to seduce new social groups aspiring to gentility and readers “eager to break down existing hierarchies” (Hadfield 2014, 15). Were these new readers, who were neither part of the aristocracy nor of the lower strata, still members of the popular classes? If we agree on the fact that “popular” culture gradually evolved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to encompass new readers with low origins but who had worked their way up the social ladder, the answer will certainly be “yes.” Beaumont’s readers must indeed have enjoyed characters that resembled them, mainly consisting of hardworking apprentices, craftsmen, and servants.

Resulting in an overlap of high and low, the general increase in literacy so characteristic of the early modern period is well exemplified by a Coventry mason who staged a pageant for Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth during her 1575 visit to the house of Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. Thanks to Robert Laneham’s letter to his friend Humphrey Martin, we have a detailed first-hand description of the royal festivities that took place on that occasion. In particular, Laneham tells of a Coventry man who performed the traditional Coventry Hock Tuesday play before the Queen (Laroque 1991, 34; Greenblatt 2004, 43–6). Surprisingly, this Captain Cox – for such was his name – had brought with him ballads, almanacs, tales, and even poems by Virgil and Spenser. So, against all odds, this humble citizen who was familiar with English legends and old popular customs also knew of Latin writers, whose works he had probably studied at the local grammar school. Of course, he was certainly something of an exception, but he must have left a deep impression on those who attended the festivities, so much so that Captain Cox’s ghost appears years later in Ben Jonson’s 1624 *Masque of Owls* (Laroque 1991, 127–8). Once more popular and learned cultures intersect here, a congruence that is certainly one of the characteristic features of early modern festivity. While at the end of the Middle Ages there was a yawning gap between aristocratic and popular cultures, the late sixteenth century saw the beginning of an opposite trend where vulgar and noble merged.

This hybridization contributed to the construction of a new national consciousness. The human body became an object of study, desire, and abjection as festive energies let loose in the village streets inevitably ostracized individuals or else reified them. In the form of popular justice known as “charivari” or “skimmington ride,” widows who remarried too soon after the death of their husbands or who contracted ill-assorted matches were publicly reviled to the sounds of “rough music” (Thompson 1972). On public stages, this type of ritualized group violence appealed to those who enjoyed the spectacle of grotesque bodies and were fascinated by corporeal punishments and public shaming, as seen in young Webster’s tongue-in-cheek sadism in John Madden’s film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998). Yet early modern drama is not just awash with enclosed, blazoned, wounded, or bleeding bodies; it is also replete with the more ephemeral, fleeting bodies of fairies, devils, witches, and ghosts. A majority of people in the audience, and not just the illiterate ones, did not hesitate to look for supernatural help to counter a number of benign illnesses, solve their daily problems, and ensure future prosperity (Thomas 1971, 556; Lamb 2006, 29–44).

To meet the demands of their audiences, early modern playwrights did not simply inject folklore elements and popular customs and expressions into their works. They had to diversify

their output. Favored by “the acquisition of permanent playing places that allowed for the broad fixing of the structure of the acting companies” as well as for “the development of large and varied wardrobes” (Hyland 2011, 16–17), disguise plots and devices proliferated, a not entirely surprising fact if we keep in mind the role of clothing in popular traditions. *Clyomon and Clamydes*, composed in the 1570s and revived in the 1580s, is “the earliest extant play to have a woman disguise herself as a man” (Hyland 2011, 17). During the same performance, early modern spectators could enjoy the diversity of costumes, jeer at aristocrats wearing large feathered hats or surrounded by their parasitic court, and be amazed or amused by some graphic low-life scenes which, despite their exotic settings, reflected in some way or other London’s own undergrounds and squalid areas. They could identify with other onstage spectators (often depicted by attentive playwrights as jovial troublemakers interrupting the show), while distancing themselves from the rich and mighty. They could cry, be frightened, be appalled, smile, crack nuts, and laugh heartily.

Playwrights had been used to presenting a wide range of emotions, and depending on which theatrical companies they were writing for, they were careful to keep in mind the specific skills of particular actors. Great clowns gave an undeniable advantage to the troupes of the public theaters. Richard Tarlton, for instance, who played for the Queen’s Men, or William Kempe, who belonged to the Earl of Leicester’s players in the 1580s before he became a partner of Lord Strange’s Men and then one of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men in the 1590s, were both talented enough to attract large audiences. Indeed, these two clowns were excellent improvisers, so much so that their ad-libbing came to influence the texts of the plays, making them even more popular with the spectators. In a much later period and in a completely different perspective, Richard Brome’s *The Antipodes* (1640) has a character named Letoy, who directs a play meant as a physical treatment for Peregrine’s strange form of melancholy, blame one of his actors, Byplay, for taking “licence to [himself] to add unto / [His] parts [his] own free fancy, and sometimes / To alter or diminish what the writer / With care and skill composed” (2.1.94–7), thereby altering the performance with unexpected jests and impromptu cues. Byplay retorts that “That is a way ... has been allowed / On elder stages to move mirth and laughter,” to which Letoy sternly reminds him that this age is now past:

Yes, in the days of Tarlton and Kemp,
 Before the stage was purged from barbarism
 And brought to the perfection it now shines with.
 Then fools and jesters spent their wits, because
 The poets were wise enough to save their own
 For profitabler uses.

(2.1.102–7)

Indeed, by the 1630s, the clown’s improvisations were regarded as disruptive and were thus progressively banished from the public stages. However, during the Elizabethan era, improvised performances contributed to the success of many plays. In spite of Hamlet’s advice to the player – “let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them” (3.2.34–5) – the anonymous *Trial of Chivalry*, printed in 1605, clearly asked the actors to improvise, as one of the stage directions simply reads “*speaks anything, and Exit*” (qtd. in Dessen and Thomson 1999, 161–2).

This example is far from unique and, if anything, suggests that the spectators who attended open-air theater performances did enjoy those sometimes rough comic moments that contributed

to break the theatrical routine. Little is known of Tarlton's life, but this apparently strongly built, hard-drinking provincial man, one of the most popular players of the 1570s and 1580s, was then regarded as a typical plebeian figure. He came from the lower orders, "observed the customs of the city from the outside" (Thomson 2004), and performed for the people. His death in September 1588 seems to have so much saddened the population of theatergoers that he was revived two years later in *Tarltons Neues Out of Purgatorie* (1590), where he is turned into an eternal storyteller. The pamphlet was highly successful as a form of popular literature allowing fans to read about their favorite actor and, as it were, to meet him after his death, efficiently counterbalancing the fleeting nature of oral performance. Tarlton, however, was finally replaced and given a successor in the person of William Kempe, who became the main comic performer in the 1590s, when he enjoyed considerable fame. Not only did Kempe excel in malapropisms and coarse humor, but he also specialized in the (often bawdy) jig traditionally improvised at the end of each performance. He had become such a star that, in 1599, he felt he could leave Shakespeare's company to start a career of solo clowning.

Laughter played an important role in English popular culture, which was mainly a culture of jest. It incorporated many different forms of humor, though, and could be tinged with wisdom, irony, or horror. Fully aware of the subversive dimension of laughter (Thomas 1977, 80), early modern dramatists did not just rely on clowns but often brought rebellious women on stage. The sight of gossipy, unruly ladies played by cross-dressed boys seems to have fascinated a society which, even though it was governed by a queen, remained strongly patriarchal. All the same, the frequent presence of these "women on top" in many plays of the period reflects a deep male anxiety toward sexually aggressive wives. Along with the nurse and the comic tavern hostess, the garrulous old wife (usually associated with a popular female narrator such as Madge in George Peele's 1595 *Old Wives Tale*), the cross-dressed heroine and the more disquieting shrew (like Moll in Thomas Middleton's 1611 *Roaring Girl*) all became part of a popular tradition. This seems to have allowed playwrights to lionize combative maids, wives and widows, especially when they were desperate for success. For example, in *Soleman and Perseda*, entered in the Stationers' Register in November 1592, Perseda disguises herself as a man in order to defend her city. In Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West; Or, A Girl Worth Gold*, written in the early 1600s, Bess (a maid not unlike Queen Elizabeth herself) humiliates Roughman, the gallant, as she easily dominates him by pretending to be a man. Shifting back and forth between male and female identities through the play, Bess keeps redefining herself, playing with gender codes while always preserving her virtue and her chastity. No wonder then that the "fair maid" quickly became a central figure on the public London stages.

Now, because disguised women were bound to meet male characters, the homoerotic potential of the convention thus multiplied. If, on the one hand, graphic and pornographic representations of love and desire, like Giulio Romano's infamous illustrations (*I modi*) of Aretino's sixteen *Sonetti lussoriosi* (1527), were first and foremost part of a learned culture in early modern Europe, joking allusions to scatology, sex, and venereal diseases were on the other hand quite frequent on the London stages. Unavoidably, what was considered comic by some was regarded as vulgar by others. The imperfect plots and fictions of open-air playhouses were criticized by Sir Philip Sidney, who regarded most of these plays as crude and indecorous: "But besides these grosse absurdities, howe all their Playes bee neither right tragedies, nor right Comedies, mingling Kinges and Clownes ... so as neither the admiration and Commiseration, nor the right sportfulness is by their mongrel Tragicomodie obtained" (Sidney [1595] 1968, 1.v). George Puttenham visibly shared Sidney's disdain for these forms of low entertainment aimed at pleasing the

multitude at the expense of decorum and good taste, just as he objected to the recycling of old tales as well as to the vulgarity and licentiousness of these forms of cheap popular art:

small & popular Musickes song by these *Cantabanqui* upon benches and barrels heads where they have none other audience then boys or country fellows that passe by them in the streete, or else by blind harpers or such like tavern minstrels that give a fit of mirth for a groat, & their matters being for the most part stories of old time, as the tale of Sir *Topas*, the reportes of *Bevis of Southampton*, *Guy of Warwicke*, and *Clyme of the Clough* & such other old Romances or historicall rimes, made purposely for the recreation of the common people at Christmass diners and brideales, and in taverns & alehouses and such other places of base resort, also they be used in Carols and rounds and such light or lascivious Poemes, which are commonly more commodiously uttered by these buffoons or vices in plays then by any other person. (Puttenham [1589] 1968, 2: 69)

Unity of place was almost never respected on the popular stage, not to speak of the unity of time, virtually unknown to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. As against this, Sidney's views trying to promote a more elitist, classical stance had to wait until the Restoration to be fully accepted and enforced on stage. But, at the end of the sixteenth century, theatrical audiences really preferred cultural syncretism, variety, and *bricolage*, and they openly welcomed multiple plots. In short, the theatergoers who kept asking for generic experimentations and new sensory experiences certainly wanted to be entertained rather than edified, even if the morality tradition persisted in some form or other.

A Theater for All: Mass Sociability

The influence of medieval drama extended well into the sixteenth century. Under Edward VI, professional troupes still performed interludes like Robert Wever's *Lusty Juventus*, probably written between 1547 and 1553, in order to cater to a clientele of young spectators and apprentices in quest of spiritual edification. In their *Looking Glasse for London and England* (1594), Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene revived the tradition of biblical drama. They stuck to the basic structures of the old moralities by depicting the corrupted city of Nineveh as a counter-model of sorts, while simultaneously entertaining their audience by offering them the enticing spectacle of sex and licentiousness rather than the more moral (and less funny!) one of virtue and chastity. In this they were followed by many imitators between 1590 and 1602, when "at least thirteen biblical plays were commissioned" to entertain the London audiences (Sager 2013, 56). Today, Lodge and Greene's *Looking Glasse* is the only extant one alongside George Peele's *David and Bethsabe*, a play composed between 1588 and 1590 and printed no fewer than five times between 1594 and 1617 (Sager 2013, 56–7).

Meanwhile, in rural England, regional festivals, ballads, traditional games, church-ales, and banquets kept all their vitality in spite of the regular Puritan attacks against these so-called remnants of paganism, all the more so as the local aristocratic landowner often encouraged them. During the mid-winter festivities, masked groups of mummers danced, performed seasonal folk plays, visited neighboring houses and went around parishes, asking for food and beverages (Twycross and Carpenter 2002, 82–102). At Christmas, mummers' plays traditionally featured a mock combat between St. George and a Turkish knight. But, somewhat unfortunately, the oldest texts related to such plays only date back to the eighteenth century. Such festivities had been threatened by the spirit of the Reformation.

The St. George's plays are a case in point, as the numerous popular customs involving the presence of St. George were banished at the accession of Edward VI in 1547. Because St. George had been revered as a Catholic saint, he was then regarded as a symbol of the old religion and, as such, he was no longer welcome among the Church authorities. One had to wait for the reign of Mary Tudor to see local rejoicings with this traditional patriotic figure, and if Elizabeth did not forbid mentioning him (Spenser tellingly relies on a performance of a St. George's play in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*), his appearances on the stage began to decline dramatically. This corresponds to a larger trend as, toward the end of the sixteenth century, mummers' plays and other popular festivities suffered from the regular assaults of the Puritans, who often succeeded in having them suppressed. As pointed out by Michael Bristol, "the participatory aspects of popular culture" were now "in decline," and the feeling of "conviviality" which had so far characterized village celebrations gradually faded away under Elizabeth I (2002, 132). Robin Hood skits, maypoles, and morris dancing, which for decades had been part and parcel of England's folk culture, were now regarded as dangerously licentious pagan idols by the more radical promoters of the reformed religion, who condemned the excessive libido as well as the rowdy behavior and drunkenness of the participants. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, many of these popular celebrations had been suppressed, until James I's 1618 *Book of Sports* made it clear that the "having of May-Games, Whitson Ales, and Morris-Dances, and the setting up of May-poles" were "lawful recreations" on Sunday at the end of the church service (Smith 1999, 156). For the less sectarian members of the population, agrarian festivities remained a locus of interaction among children, females, servants, and aristocrats, all of them brought together by a common nostalgia for the past (Laroque 1991).

Such an idealized past could paradoxically generate new popular forms. At the root of the innovative drama of early modern England, one finds not only fairs, feasts, and dances, but also puppet shows that typically belonged to a carnivalesque popular culture. Although they had been banned from churches in the early Reformation (puppets were indeed used to represent the Catholic saints in the religious puppet shows), some of them were still used to present biblical topics, and at local fairs they continued to appeal to a significant number of spectators. In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (5.3, 5.4, and 5.5) one finds burlesque puppet performances of "Hero and Leander" and "Damon and Pythias," which the Puritan Zeal-of-the-land Busy interrupts after declaring them an "abomination." In processions, puppets were used as effigies like the Jack-a-Lent, which was part of a London procession in 1553 (Lamb 2006, 157). Even professional actors occasionally resorted to puppetry so that puppet shows became an increasingly privileged medium used for satirical or burlesque effects.

As far as the London playhouses were concerned, the shrill voices and numerous tracts of those who objected to the theater suggest that the Londoners massively attended dramatic performances outside the city precincts. Themselves fond of lavish pageants, the city fathers must have been afraid of the dangers posed by idle masses and undisciplined crowds. In 1583, Philip Stubbes's *Anatomie of Abuses* devoted six pages to plays and performances, focusing on the abuse of the sacred word of God. The pamphleteer Anthony Munday hammered the point home when in 1580 he blamed the toxicity of the stage, likely to turn innocent, vulnerable Londoners into monsters: "Manie [persons] of nature honest, and tractable, have been altered by those shows and spectacles, and become monstrous" (93). Such attacks continued well into the seventeenth century, and in his *Histrion-Mastix* (1633) the Puritan lawyer William Prynne did not hesitate to assimilate theater to a "most contagious plague." Figuring the stage as a major source of infection, he also echoed the belief that plague contamination was generated by foul-smelling air, at a time when no one was really aware of the role played by fleas and rats in the spreading of the disease.

Rowdy Playgoers

In spite of the repeated closures of the theaters due to bouts of plague, most playgoers were not discouraged in their desire to see new plays. For all their concerns about public order and safety, people were still eager to attend – and to criticize – public performances. Much has already been said (essentially by disgruntled playwrights like Ben Jonson) about the supposed lack of sophistication of outdoor theater audiences. Yet the spectators must have had a keen understanding of what they saw, for they were much solicited by the playwrights. Not only did they have to imagine most of the settings, but they also had to accept the daylight convention of the open-air stage in order to understand the implicit tensions of the numerous nighttime scenes of early modern drama.

Both public and private stages could in fact accommodate complex plots and subplots, and both entertained audiences, which sometimes proved quite difficult. In *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), Thomas Dekker focuses on the indoor Blackfriars and jokingly comments on the vulgarity of the playgoers, whom he calls “garlic-breathed stinkards” and “scarecrows in the yard” (qtd. in Whitney 2006, 199). He proves even more contemptuous toward the wealthy gallants sitting on the benches on each side of the stage, thereby disturbing the performance. Discipline was certainly not the major characteristic of the London crowds at the time, and several eyewitness accounts suggest that spectators were quick in voicing disapproval if something displeased them.

Because the theatrical companies of the time depended on their audiences' judgments to make money, they often had no other choice but to revise presumably weaker scenes and make last-minute changes that took into account the reactions of the playgoers in order to ensure their own financial stability. Following up on Ben Jonson's distinction between the “Spectators or Hearers” of a play in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, or on Thomas Nashe's distinction between “Spectores” and “Auditors” in *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* (1596, sig. X3v), it would probably be wrong to assume that, while a “popular” audience certainly listened to but essentially looked at the actors, the “elitist” spectators were keener on listening to the words. If there is something true in the fact that the elite were able to grasp elaborate language games while the groundlings tended to rely on visual tricks to appreciate the plays (the graphic violence of fashionable revenge tragedies undoubtedly catered to these particular requirements), then words, music, and noises were probably just as appealing to the “low” as they were to the “high,” all the more so because the elaborate visual techniques of the masque, for example, did not appear before the early seventeenth century and were exclusively reserved for courtly audiences. As Bruce R. Smith observes, “Listening, as opposed to looking, seems especially apt with respect to early modern England, as a collectivity of cultures that depended so extensively on face-to-face communication” (1999, 12). In sum, the large and noisy public playhouses obliged the actors to rely on a resonant delivery to make themselves heard, while a more intimate style of acting became possible only on the private stages. More generally, the material conditions of the early modern professional theater led to the development of specific acoustic practices, along with a dramatic rhetoric based on sounds, interjections, music, and cries, far beyond the simple, not to say simplistic, dichotomy of elite audience and popular playgoers.

The importance given to sound reminds us that watching plays in open-air theaters was an eminently collective process. The Globe could accommodate up to three thousand patrons against barely seven hundred for the private theaters. Because attendance could be massive, the mob sometimes became rather turbulent. On Sunday April 10, 1580, for example, the players of

the Earl of Oxford at the Theatre could not escape a major riot at the playhouse. Writing to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Mayor of London reports the incident as follows:

Where it happened on Sunday last that some great disorder was committed at the Theatre, I sent for the under-sheriff of Middlesex to understand the circumstances, to the intent that by myself or by him I might have caused such redress to be had as in duty and discretion I might, and, therefore, did also send for the players to have appeared afore me, and the rather because those plays do make assemblies of citizens and their families of whom I have charge. (qtd. in Wickham, Berry, and Ingram 2000, 342)

In the 1590s, such riots continued, with cheeky apprentices stealing food and attacking gentlemen and their servants. Years later, the theatrical entrepreneur Christopher Beeston, who had until then been associated with the open-air Red Bull theater, decided to transfer his players to the Cockpit, a private playhouse. The London apprentices were infuriated by this because they then had to pay six times as much to gain admittance to the Cockpit. So, on Shrove Tuesday, March 4, 1617, they attacked the new theater and burned its playbooks. Beeston, as a consequence, had to rebuild his vandalized theater entirely.

Significantly, if these young men often behaved as loud and sometimes riotous spectators, their problems were also directly addressed on the London stages. Thomas Heywood's early chivalric romance, *The Four Prentices of London* (1592), features four dutiful young men: Godfrey is apprenticed to a mercer, Guy to a goldsmith, Charles to a haberdasher, and Eustace of Bulloigne to a grocer. Besides gesturing to the importance of the London guild culture, the characters emphasize an ideology of service that underlay the foundations of the whole English society. Significantly, since he belonged to a "self-conscious and literate group" (Burke 2009, 67) in real life, the shoemaker became an important character in such popular pieces of prose fiction as Thomas Deloney's celebrated series of tales, *The Gentle Craft* (1597–8), or in popular plays like Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599), a comedy written for Henslowe's Rose Theater. By and large, at the turn of the century, early modern drama tried to accommodate the new aspirations for recognition and fame on the part of London's craftsmen and more humble citizens.

Playwriting: Hits and Flops

While playgoing was a collective – if not always convivial – experience, the writing of plays was also a collaborative process in which almost all early modern writers willingly engaged. The dramatic output of Beaumont and Fletcher offers a good example of the way writers lived and wrote. What has been called a homoerotic friendship, since they lived together, was in fact common practice at the time. However, this almost idyllic kind of literary collaboration involving a mutual partnership was far from being the most representative of the highly competitive environment of the public theaters. There were various forms of coauthorship, including posthumous ones which principally aimed at updating the original script. At the request of the companies, particular writers were assigned the specific task of partially rewriting some of the popular but then somewhat old-fashioned plays of the repertoire. As often happened, the play-text was parceled out to various writers for purely commercial reasons: because of the rapid turnover of plays on the public stage, the playwrights had to write at great speed, so that the more at work, the quicker the text could be delivered to the acting company. In this regard, one should keep in mind that the repertory of the Admiral's Men, run by Philip Henslowe, or later, of Queen Anne's

Men, managed by Christopher Beeston, “could include as many as two dozen different plays, with some eighteen new ones rotated in for trial over the course of a season” (Preiss 2014, 18). Obviously, one playwright alone, however prolific he may have been, could not provide a troupe with so many plays in such a short time.

Another important type of collaboration concerned all sorts of revisions aimed at making the play fit for the stage (and for the printed version, if and when necessary) in the light of censorship. And revisions themselves could belong to different categories: some were made almost immediately, while others appeared necessary several years after the play’s first performance and were often motivated by a shifting political context. Beyond these very different practices, it should be clear that collaboration was the pragmatic result of popular demand: early modern playgoers kept asking for new plays, and they were willing to pay provided that what they saw fitted their tastes and was found good entertainment.

But if the spectators had been disappointed by a play, it was hard to make them come back. The reasons why a play failed are complex and can be systematically ascribed neither to the ineptitude of the playwright nor to the poor understanding of the popular audience. When John Fletcher’s *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608–9) was first performed at the Blackfriars, the audience’s disappointment apparently stemmed from the lack of rural pastimes and folk customs that had been anticipated by most playgoers. Indeed, as the author bitterly explains in the “Preface to the Reader,” one can read in the quarto version of the play,

It is a pastoral tragic-comedy, which the people seeing when it was played, having ever had a singular gift in defining, concluded to be a play of country hired shepherds in grey cloaks, with curtailed dogs in strings, sometimes laughing together, and sometimes killing one another; and missing Whitsun-ales, cream, wassail, and morris-dances, began to be angry. (qtd. in Laroque 1991, 42–3)

As Andrew Gurr notes, “Fletcher had more grounds for grief than most since the playgoers at Blackfriars seem to have expected a traditional kind of play with May-games and rural clowns, not at all the usual Blackfriars pretension” (1987, 95). The consequences of the gap between dramatic presentation and audience expectation certainly served as a warning to Shakespeare (who was later to collaborate with Fletcher) who, in *The Winter’s Tale* (1611), was careful to provide popular elements, such as the long sheep-shearing passages in Act 4, scene 4, that had been thought lacking in *The Faithful Shepherdess*.

More than any other philosophical or literary movement, Renaissance popular culture kept refashioning and recycling all sorts of traditional elements in a highly creative and deeply contaminating way. As such, it was a rich reservoir of expressions, imagery and customs, which most contemporary playwrights could only ignore at their own cost; even expensive indoor theaters had to include at least some of the variegated elements that had penetrated “high” culture as well as aristocratic tastes. This also points to the absence of watertight barriers between these two worlds, at least on the London stages, and to the bitter consequences that followed if a real separation between the two was tentatively established.

So, what if, in Renaissance England, a “popular” play was nothing more than a successful entertainment, a play managing to enter tradition, notwithstanding its use of fresh dramatic devices, by being regularly revived and revised on the public stage in its own time? Just like today, there was then no ready-made recipe to ensure commercial success. Writing a good, popular play was all the more tricky as audiences constantly reframed the commercial theater, that in turn constantly reshaped society. Moreover, the impact of authorial names was not yet

strong enough to make a weak play attractive, even though that could help, as in the case of Shakespeare. All things considered, the playwrights who were most successful on the popular stages of Renaissance England were surely those who did anticipate the interaction of learned and popular cultures, the alliance of the gross and the refined, the combination of the oral and the written, heard and seen. In other words, those who were ready and willing to narrow the gap between the powerful and the powerless became the renowned authors of popular plays that often integrated many traditional and folk elements and expressions.

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Multiculturalism and Early Modern Drama

Scott Oldenburg

In the twilight hours of May 5, 1593, a handbill was anonymously posted to the door of Austin Friars, the Dutch Church of London. Written in what might be generously described as an erratic pentameter, the bill, known as the Dutch Church Libel, alleged that immigrants, especially those from the Low Countries and France, “eate us up as bread” while “Our pore artificers doe starve & dye.” The libel accuses aliens or strangers (the early modern terms for foreigners) of merely posing as Protestants to enter the realm, artificially raising the prices of goods, putting English craftsmen out of work, spying for foreign governments, and causing rents to increase. Fortunately the libel failed to bring about the bloody riot it called for, but it did result in several arrests, most notably those of dramatists Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, for, although the bill was poorly written, it was signed with the unlikely foreign pseudonym of “Tamberlaine,” Marlowe’s larger-than-life conqueror.¹

England had been host to a small number of immigrants from the Continent throughout the 1300 and 1400s, but the Reformation led to new levels of immigration (Bolton 1998; Colson 2010; Kim 2001). Even before the major conflicts on the Continent caused thousands to seek refuge in England, Edward VI had granted a charter to establish a stranger church in London. The charter ensured that Protestants from abroad could “freely and quietly . . . practise, enjoy, use and exercise their own rites and ceremonies and their own peculiar ecclesiastical discipline, notwithstanding that they do not conform with the rites and ceremonies used in our Kingdom” (Lindeboom 1950, 202). No doubt Edward and his advisors thought that an influx of Continental Protestants might facilitate further reform in England, and the charter is remarkable in its formal tolerance for ecclesiastical diversity.

Mary I overturned Edward’s accommodations and instead sought the expulsion of Protestant refugees, but many stayed in England despite Mary’s orders. At the start of Elizabeth I’s reign, immigrants made up roughly 12.5 percent of London’s population. Elizabeth placed the stranger churches under the control of the Bishop of London rather than reinstate her brother’s more

liberal charter.² Still, the stranger churches retained much of their independence and were seen by some to have a positive effect on England's Reformation.³ The anonymous play *New Custom* (1573) highlights the influence of immigrants on English Protestantism: at one point the characters Ignorance and Perverse Doctrine attack an English minister and are vanquished by Light of the Gospell, a Protestant reformer who immigrated to England from the Continent (*New Custom* 1573, 3.1, sig. D1v). Immigrants to England in turn recognized the debt they owed to Elizabeth. When the Queen visited Norwich, where the stranger population sometimes reached as high as 30 percent, she was treated to lavish pageants, which included a Dutch minister's homage to Elizabeth for protecting refugees and acting as "the nourse of Christ his church" (Galloway 1984, 256, 264).

Early modern attitudes about the religious conviction of immigrants were not always or uniformly positive, however. The Dutch Church Libel alleged that some immigrants only claimed to be Protestant refugees to gain entry to the realm. Immigrants were also sometimes suspected of bringing to England objectionable forms of Protestantism. For example, in 1575 two Dutch immigrants in London were executed for obstinately holding to their Anabaptist beliefs.⁴ Performed several decades later, John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* continued the association of immigrants with subversive religions that might contaminate English faith. In that play the Dutch courtesan with the oddly Italianate name of Franceschina is a member of the Family of Love, as are several English characters apparently in need of reform. Paranoia about the influence and impact of immigration on the realm was inconsistent, however, and typically corresponded to tensions abroad, dearth, or perceived increases in immigration.

Concerns about how many immigrants had entered the realm led the state to institute the Returns of Aliens, a periodic census of all aliens or strangers in London. Among the many French and Dutch names listed in the Returns one may also find Flemish, Walloon, Italian, Spanish, Scottish, and Irish names, as well as entries like "Gregory Negro, merchaunt, estr" or "Ferdinando, a blackamore."⁵ As C. J. Sisson (1938) has shown, although associated with the Italian Reformed Church and the English Church respectively, names like "Barnard Lewes, marchante" and "Ferdinando Alvores" turn out to be "marranos" or converted Jews hailing from Portugal.⁶ The sizes of the African and Jewish communities in England were significantly smaller than those of the French, Dutch, Flemish, Italian, and Scottish, but still suggest that even as plays like Shakespeare's *Othello* and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* indulged audiences in a kind of distant exoticism, they also gestured to diversity closer to home.⁷

England was thus confronted with issues of multiculturalism throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That multiculturalism was a good deal different from its present-day counterpart, however. Early modern multiculturalism might focus on differences of complexion, but it also emphasized cultural and linguistic difference in addition to the geohumoral differences discussed by Mary Floyd-Wilson (2003; see also Chapter 33 in this volume). More importantly, early modern subjects were not generally aiming at equality so much as reciprocity and placement within the social hierarchy. Nonetheless, with high numbers of refugees fleeing the Wars of Religion on the Continent, English people seem to have confronted some of the questions addressed by contemporary multiculturalism. What sorts of cultural and economic accommodations should be made for those born outside of the realm? How much assimilation should be expected of immigrants? How open should England's immigration policy be? What kind of cultural impact might immigration have on Englishness? As immigrants had children and married English women and men, what did it mean to be English? These questions were debated in Parliament, among artisans, in legal cases, and, perhaps most publicly, on the stage.

As the Dutch Church Libel indicates, these issues were not easy to resolve, nor was diversity uniformly accepted. In 1517, well before the major waves of immigration in the latter half of the sixteenth century, thousands of Londoners rioted against strangers in what is known as the Ill or Evil May Day Riot (Holmes 1965). Primarily focused on the privileges of merchant strangers and foreign courtiers, the riot lingered in the collective memory, often cited as a cautionary tale of civil disobedience, and remembered on the stage in the collectively written play *Sir Thomas More*. As an indication of the state's concerns about the issue, Master of Revels Edmund Tilney evidently insisted that performance of *Sir Thomas More* "Leave out the insurrection wholly and the cause thereof" (Metz 1989, 32–5).

This is not to say that England was uniformly xenophobic, especially once a sense of shared religion was established among Protestants. Although small-scale anti-alien activity persisted intermittently throughout the sixteenth century, people seem to have taken a certain pride in England's status as a place of refuge for Protestants suffering abroad. At Court, Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* (1599) began with a prologue praising Queen Elizabeth: "Her sacred hand hath evermore been knowne, / As soone helde out to straungers as to her owne" (57–9).⁸ John Strype explains that the "better sort of the Queen's subjects were very kind unto these poor Protestants" (1824, 241), a sentiment verified by one Dutch immigrant to Norwich who wrote to his family abroad, "You would never believe how friendly the [Dutch] people are together, and the English are the same and quite loving to our nation" (Tawney and Power 1963, 199). Meanwhile George Abbott, who would go on to become Archbishop of Canterbury, admonished those who were antagonistic to the refugees to recall

the precise Charge which God gave to the Israelites, To deal wel with al Straungers; because the Time once was, when themselves were Strangers in that cruel Land of Aegypt: And not forgetting, that other Nations to their immortal Praise, were a Refuge to the English in their last bloody Persecution in Q. Mary's Days. (Strype 1824, 170)

Indeed, the evocation of Scripture and memory of English Protestant exile under Catholic rule formed key elements in arguing against any xenophobic tendencies.

As Abbott's citation of Scripture suggests, positive attitudes about immigration in part hinged on the premium placed on ideals of hospitality, the bond among coreligionists, and the possibility that regime change could render anyone a stranger. Indeed, memories of exile under Mary were frequently evoked as explanation for encouraging an ethic of hospitality. At the same time, although many would cite a long history of the virtue of hospitality throughout the Bible and extending back to Plato and Aristotle, Felicity Heal (1990, 10) has shown that many English writers saw hospitality as a particularly English trait. Thus, if not the practice, at least praise of hospitality was ubiquitous in sermons, political tracts, and in the feasts depicted or alluded to at the end of most comedies (Palmer 1992).

Even so, there were limits to hospitality. The fullest contemporary account of theories of hospitality appears in *Christian Hospitalitie Handled Common-place-wise* (1632) by Caleb Dalechamp, a French Protestant refugee to England. Dalechamp asserts that although hospitality ought to be extended "to all strangers, Specially strangers professing the true Religion," it also involved responsibilities on the part of immigrants, that "this toleration of strangers is ever to be understood with a double caution: That they be peaceable men and that the land be large enough for them" (24, 11). That is, for Dalechamp and many of his contemporaries, hospitality required a reciprocal relationship between English and immigrant. While much of the Dutch Church

Libel smacks of a hyperbolic xenophobia, concerns about the effect of immigration on the economy were not entirely unfounded. The central issue was the coveted freedom of the city. To open their own shops and retail goods, Londoners had to either inherit the right to do so from their fathers or go through an apprenticeship and pay the entry fee associated with their particular guild (Rappaport 1989, 291–4). Immigrants by definition could not inherit the right, and it was deemed unreasonable to expect skilled adult refugees to enter into extended apprenticeships for nothing more than room and board. Elizabeth, and James after her, thus countenanced the rights of immigrants to peacefully practice their trades in England. This exception to labor practices in London raised important questions for the guilds, which authorized the freedom of the city and regulated the quality of goods and number of apprentices and journeymen any shop could maintain. Many immigrants either were ignorant of the guild statutes or imagined that since the state had authorized their freedom to work that they could operate outside of guild authority (Luu 2005).

This issue was wrestled with throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England. A few months prior to the posting of the Dutch Church Libel, for instance, a bill was introduced to the House of Commons designed to limit the ability of immigrants to retail foreign goods in London. Those in favor of the bill pointed out that not only did most English natives have to go through an arduous apprenticeship to gain the privilege of retailing goods in the city, but that aliens' connections abroad gave them an unfair advantage in the marketplace, resulting in greater poverty among the English. Those against the bill countered that aliens needed to have a way of maintaining themselves, that aliens were being scapegoated, and that "the Riches and Renown of the City cometh by entertaining of Strangers, and giving liberty unto them." The bill was successfully defeated, but the debate itself reveals the diverse attitudes among the English as they found themselves in an increasingly multicultural England (D'Ewes 1693, 505–9).

While supporters of the bill might appear biased against immigrants, some of their arguments reveal quite a different attitude altogether. Nicholas Fuller, for example, railed,

It is no Charity to have this pity on them to our own utter undoing; for them there ought none to be sworn a Denizen, but he should first swear he is not worth five pound. This is to be noted in these Strangers, they will not converse with us, they will not marry with us, they will not buy any thing of our Country-men. (D'Ewes 1693, 506)

Fuller's anger is clear, yet its source is not properly xenophobia but rather a frustrated desire for greater integration with strangers. Similarly, the debate reveals that many were especially astute about scapegoating. In response to Fuller, Sir Edward Dymock remarked that the bill appeared to have been introduced by Englishmen keen to divert attention away from their own manipulation of markets. Less measured positions were also voiced. Sir Walter Raleigh speaking specifically of the Dutch, alleged, "The nature of the Dutchman is to fly to no man but for his profit, and they will obey no man long, now under Spain, now under Mountfort, now under the Prince of Orange, but under no Governour long," and further questioned the religious convictions of Protestant refugees (D'Ewes 1693, 508–9).

Related to the debate over retailing, England had to confront the status of the children of strangers. As Jacob Selwood (2010, 87–128) explains, throughout the seventeenth century courts heard numerous cases brought by the English-born children of immigrants who complained that they should be accorded the rights and privileges of English subjects. Despite a

1608 ruling that those born in the monarch's territories were by definition the king's subjects, local authorities continued policies ensuring that the children of immigrants were treated as immigrants. That is, they often had to pay higher tax rates and had more difficulty in gaining economic freedom in the city. The children of immigrants thus posed a challenge to ideas of national belonging and how to define Englishness.

The question of the Englishness of children of immigrants was in part taken up by William Haughton in his play *Englishmen for My Money* (1616). The main plot of the play features three impoverished English gentlemen attempting to woo the three daughters of their Portuguese (and apparently Jewish) creditor. Although the three daughters speak perfect English and were born of an English mother, when a misunderstanding occurs, one of the suitors hurls the epithet "mongrel" at one of the daughters (Campos 2002, 55), emphasizing that from his perspective, the father's cultural influence takes precedence over her birthplace. As Emma Smith (2001) sees it, the three daughters are symbols of the English nation and, paradoxically, the cosmopolitanism of its urban centers.

Although the guilds were intent on limiting the ability of immigrant artisans to outdo their English counterparts, one of the more productive approaches to the problem involved concerted efforts to include immigrants in the guild as "foreign brethren." (Littleton 1995, 180; Kirk and Kirk 1902, 305–14; Scouloudi 1985, 40–4). Guilds thus maintained the scope of their authority, while strangers gained greater integration in the local economy. Although dismissed by David Scott Kastan as "a fantasy of social cohesion" (1991, 153), Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* reflects the integration of immigrant artisans into the guild system. In that play, Simon Eyre's journeyman shoemakers threaten a work stoppage if he fails to hire Hans, the Dutch shoemaker. The Dutch shoemaker turns out to be an English gentleman in apparently convincing disguise, but at this point, in the shoemakers' view, they are standing up for inclusion of strangers in their shop.

Dekker may be a special case, however. He was more than likely the descendant of Dutch immigrants, and this background shows in his texts, which often advocate for English intervention in the Low Countries and tolerance of strangers at home (Jones-Davies 1958, 1: 29–30; Gasper 1990, 20, 37). Rival dramatist John Marston was the son of an Italian immigrant to England, and while one can find traces of Italian commedia dell'arte in Marston's plays, he does not seem to have advocated on behalf of immigrant communities the way Dekker did, and may well have satirized Dekker's *The Honest Whore* in his play *The Dutch Courtesan* (Scott 2000, 212).

The theater was perhaps an especially charged space to address issues of England's increasingly multicultural character. Immigrants lived throughout London, but especially in the Liberties, where guild ordinances were likely to carry less force. These neighborhoods also happened to be near the theaters so that just before possibly seeing representations of immigrants on the stage, playgoers likely heard and saw Dutch, French, and Flemish families on the streets (Scouloudi 1985, 77). In addition to dramatists with immigrant heritages, actors also represented some of the diversity of England. The Lord Chamberlain's Men had at least one actor fluent in Welsh, and as the King's Men they added to their cast Nicholas Tooley, whose mother was Flemish. William Shakespeare lodged with a French Huguenot family; Christopher Marlowe's father had been apprenticed to a Dutch shoemaker (Nicholl 2007; Kuriyama 2002, 10, 12).

Despite such connections, there is no denying that the stage, especially the early Elizabethan stage, provided a platform for xenophobic sentiments. Although printed in 1595, the anonymous play *The Pedlers Prophecie* was likely performed in the 1560s and deals in part with the anxieties around the recent rise in immigration from the Continent. For example, an artisan registers the popular complaint about immigrants:

But Aliaunts chop up houses so in the Citie,
 That the poore craftsmen must needs depart.
 And beg if they will, the more is the pittie.

(1595, sig. D2)

The titular peddler then goads the artisan, explaining that if he were a landlord he too would rent only to aliens because they pay more. Taunting a nearby mariner, the peddler rails,

Three parts in London are alreadie Alians,
 Other mongrels, Alians children, mischieuously mixed,
 And that with the most detestable Barbarians,
 Which here for ever hath their dwellings fixed:
 Still you Mariners bring them in daily,
 So you may haue pence,
 You make your selues rich and go gaily,
 I would you were as readie to carry them hence.

(sig. D2v)

If immigration is a problem, the peddler further blames those that bring immigrants to England for a profit. *The Pedlers Prophecie* ends with a trial that asks for a rethinking of the anti-alien complaints registered in the play. Here the Judge and an Interpreter surmise that many of the problems of the play can be attributed not to mariners or immigrants but to “base medlers” like the peddler himself (sigs. F3–F3v). Elizabethan and Jacobean plays might blame immigrants for socioeconomic problems in England, but like *The Pedlers Prophecie*, they also typically find anti-alien sentiment to be a symptom of deeper problems in the commonwealth.

Even in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, however, Dutch speech is the object of considerable ridicule. Indeed, the garbled stage dialects of immigrant characters were a common source of humor in the period. The practice was so common that in *An Apology for Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney complained about plays that tended “to jest at strangers because they speak not English so well as we do” ([1595] 1970, 79–80). In the wide-ranging and essential *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners*, A. J. Hoenselaars (1992) sees stage dialect and other features of immigrant stereotypes as a measure of English patriotism, but more recent criticism has sought to nuance this argument. Lloyd Edward Kermode examines stage representations of aliens but finds “Elizabethans’ reflections on English identity as increasingly a process of finding and absorbing alien aspects around them and less the simple phenomenon of frictionally and uncooperatively rubbing up ‘against non-Englishness’” (2009, 9). For Kermode, a play like *Englishmen for My Money* with its marriage of Englishmen to half-alien women exemplifies this process of incorporation which seeks “to hybridize and strengthen Englishness” (6–7). It should be noted that the will to incorporate immigrants into English life occurred outside of the theater as well, in civic pageantry, guilds, and in actual marriages. Along similar lines, looking specifically at foreign languages presented on the English stage, Marianne Montgomery notes that the French and Welsh languages register as alien but also as the roots of English so that stage dialects often “emphasize not a self–other dichotomy but rather a productive continuity between self and other” (2012, 19).

Marjorie Rubright furthers this complication of a self–other dynamic at work in Anglo-immigrant relations. Focusing on the Dutch in England and abroad, Rubright suggests that there was often a subtle resemblance or double vision associated with the Dutch. For Rubright the intelligibility of the stage Dutch in plays like *The Shoemaker's Holiday* “dramatized the

propinquity of English and Dutch,” while the fact that the London Royal Exchange was modeled after Antwerp’s *Nieuwe Beurs* created an uncanny Dutchness in London’s economic center (2014, 89–109, 166–7). That is, rather than othering the Dutch, Rubright finds that “Representations of Anglo-Dutch relations often rattled those notions of Englishness that existed eccentric to concepts of national self-definition” (32).

To take Rubright’s work in a slightly different direction, one might consider identifications between English and immigrant that supersede or at least diminish the preeminence of national or ethnic difference. Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* again provides an ample case study. Whereas critics like Andrew Fleck (2006) and Kermode (2009, 133–44) have seen the play as expelling or containing the alien in service of national identity, the play can also be seen to be denying the importance of that very identity. While the Dutch skipper and the Englishman disguised as a Dutch shoemaker ultimately serve Simon Eyre’s ends, when the English shoemaker Firk is questioned by the mayor and Lincoln about the whereabouts of Hans (Firk doesn’t know that Hans is really English), Firk refuses to sell out his Dutch coworker, declaring, “Shall I cry treason to my corporation? No.” (4.4.97–8). Firk prioritizes his shared identity as a shoemaker over his identity as English even when turning Hans in would involve personal gain. Such things happened offstage as well. In 1554, when Mary I was attempting to expel all strangers, two Dutch shoemakers were arrested for loitering and faced expulsion until members of the Cordwainers’ Company intervened on their behalf (Pettegree 1986, 123). While shoemakers may seem like an especially tolerant group, similar stories can be found about dyers, weavers, merchants, and others.

Since Dekker appears to have had a unique connection to the Dutch, his play might be deemed an exception. Thomas Middleton’s depiction of strangers is similarly sympathetic, however. Middleton does not accord immigrants the central role that Dekker often does but he also resists vilifying immigrants. In *No Wit/Help Like a Woman’s* (1611), for example, a Dutch merchant thwarts the machinations of the vice Savorwit and, as Marianne Montgomery suggests, “temporarily offers a point of identification for the audience” (2012, 67). The merchant, explains Montgomery, is a guarantor of truth in this play.

The stage, then, offered a space for thinking through the challenges of immigration and multiculturalism. Early Elizabethan plays might allow a platform for the more reactionary attitudes arising from the unprecedented influx of immigrants in the 1560s and 1570s, but in the 1590s plays like *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* sought to question such sentiments. By the seventeenth century, immigration would continue to receive more nuance on the stage. For instance, in Dekker’s 1620 play *The Noble Spanish Soldier*, when the protagonist Balthazar faces exile, he declares,

If I were [exiled], I lose nothing, I can make any Country mine: I have a private Coat for Italian Steeetto’s, I can be treacherous with the Wallowne, drunke with the Dutch, a Chimney-sweeper with the Irish, a Gentleman with the Welsh, and turne arrant theeefe with the English, what then is my Country to me?” (3.3.100–4)

Here Balthazar heaps stereotype upon stereotype, but ends with a particularly unflattering stereotype of the English. Since most English playgoers would likely not identify themselves as thieves, the passage effectively undermines the other familiar stereotypes, rendering all stereotypes laughable.

Of course, stereotypes endure despite the cultural work of the early modern stage and various attempts to forge ties with immigrants throughout the period. It may be that the rise of national

identity as a dominant mode of identification amplifies the potential for anti-immigrant sentiment. Xenophobia reached a frenzied pitch in the long eighteenth century, the period that also saw the rise of national consciousness and the British Empire (Statt 1995). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the nation was only emergent, visible in the historical record but in competition with dynastic and provincial definitions of borders and identities. It may be that the lack of a pervasive national consciousness lent itself to early modern subjects' ability to imagine and to some extent practice inclusive communities founded on shared religion or craft. It is precisely these early multicultural communities that the rhetoric of the Dutch Church Libel sought to disrupt. Sadly, much of the bile of the Dutch Church Libel sounds uncannily like anti-immigrant sentiments of today. As we deepen our understanding of immigration and diversity in the early modern period, we should also keep in mind how such studies might complicate ideas of national identity and borders not only then, but now.

NOTES

- 1 For the full text of the Dutch Church Libel and discussion of its connection to Marlowe, see Freeman (1973); see also Kermod (2009, 71–3).
- 2 On the demographics of immigrants in early modern England, see William Cunningham ([1897] 1969, 144–6); Pettegree (1986, 21); Scouloudi (1989).
- 3 There are numerous works on the history of the stranger churches in England. A good starting point is Pettegree (1986).
- 4 This episode is discussed in several histories of the English Reformation, as John Foxe argued for tolerance of the dissenters. See Grell (2002); Elton (1984).
- 5 Kirk and Kirk (1902, 220, 235). The Huguenot Society of London has transcribed all the Returns and other similar documents and made them available in CD-ROM format. On the African community in early modern England, see Habib (2008) and Onyeka (2015).
- 6 Kirk and Kirk (1902, 279). On Jews in early modern England, see Prior (1988–90); Selwood (2010); Shapiro (1996); and Wolf (1929).
- 7 One recent collection, Espinosa and Ruiter (2014), examines several of Shakespeare's plays from this perspective.
- 8 Unless otherwise indicated, references to Dekker's plays are from Bowers (1953).

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London and Westminster

Ian W. Archer

From the 1590s on, London and Westminster were an insistent presence on the London stage. A variety of plays in the emergent genre of citizen comedy took very specific metropolitan locales: thus, among Jonson's plays, for example, the action of *Every Man In his Humour* takes place within a few blocks of the Royal Exchange and the Guildhall (with a memorable scene in the fashionable walks of St. Paul's Cathedral), of *Epicoene* along the Strand, and of *The Alchemist* in a house in the Blackfriars (Haynes 1992). Citizen comedy is suffused with London images and topographical references: "men and women are borne, and come running into the world faster than Coaches do into Cheap-side upon Symon and Iudes Day, and are eaten up by Death faster than Mutton and porridge in a term time" (Dekker and Webster's *Westward Ho*, 2.1.171–4; Dillon 2000). The plays dramatized what Peter Womack (1986) has called "the centreless interchange of diverse language types" characteristic of the urban environment; in plays like Jonson's *Every Man In his Humour* the speech types of gallant, soldier, citizen, countryman, and street seller "jostle, relativize, and make fun of one another." There is a fascination with some of the distinctive features of urban living at the turn of the century: the permeability of social barriers; the difficulties of properly maintaining one's social status in a potentially anonymous urban environment; and the clash between what Susan Wells (1981) has described as "the old communal marketplace with its communal ideology and the new economy that rendered it obsolete."

The drama was reticent about some forms of social conflict within the capital. Efforts to stage the grievances of the poorer sort were uncommon, only encountered very obliquely within citizen comedy, and often displaced into the history plays where they could be neutralized by distance. Jack Cade's rebels in *2 Henry VI* or the starving Roman mob in *Coriolanus* might be said to ventriloquize the popular voice. But even in history plays there were limits to the possible: the censor insisted on the deletion of the staging of the Evil May Day protests of 1517 from the *Sir Thomas More* play in 1593 because of the power of that uprising against aliens in the popular consciousness and the relevance of the anti-alien grievances to the circumstances of the troubled

1590s (Patterson 1989). The fault line in metropolitan society with which the drama is most insistently concerned is not that between rich and poor but that between gentlemen and citizens. Although the distinctions cannot be absolute, citizens and gentlemen liked different types of plays. Citizens enjoyed the plays which praised noble citizens who had risen from humble origins, like Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday*, escapist romances incorporating tales of apprentice gallantry, like Heywood's *Four Prentices of London*, and prodigal plays like *The London Prodigal*, in which a citizen-type misled into a life of riot and disorder eventually reforms. The more select audiences of the Blackfriars seem to have developed a taste for anticitizen burlesque. Conflict between gentry and citizens was taken as axiomatic. Standard plot lines in citizen comedy were either the maintenance of the virtue of city wives in the face of the predatory attention of courtiers, or the triumph of a member of the gentry at the expense of the city's commercial classes (Gurr 1987; A. Young 1975). The fundamentally conflictual terms of the action is captured in characters like Quomodo in Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*, who talks of the enmity between citizens and gentry "which thus stands: They're busy 'bout our wives, we 'bout their lands" (1.1.106–7). Massinger's monstrous creation of the nouveau-riche Sir Giles Overreach sees the conflict as natural, justifying his efforts to abase the upper classes in terms of the "strange Antipathie / Betweene us and true gentry" (*A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, 2.1.88–9).

Some of the tensions being articulated on the stage were being fought out among the audience. There is no doubting the social range of the audiences in the public theaters, and the notion that the establishment of the so-called private theaters excluded the citizenry is probably false. However far the private theaters may have sought to establish an exclusive clientele, they could not resist the pressure of the lower orders to ape the manners and lifestyles of their superiors. The Paul's boys probably had a less exclusive clientele than the Blackfriars. But even in the Blackfriars, there are references to the "six-penny mechanics" who sat in its "oblique caves and wedges" (Ben Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady*, Induction). Such variegated audiences meant that both public and private theaters were themselves the sites for social conflict. In 1584 a brawl developed outside the Curtain Theatre when a gentleman's servant denounced an apprentice as scum. Dekker described the gallants seated around the stage as being a target of abuse from lower-class spectators: "our feathered ostrich, like a piece of ordnance ... planted valiantly because impudently, beating down the mewes and hisses of the opposed rascality"; Jonson in his efforts to assert his control over the performance of his plays used his prologues to encourage audiences into criticisms of the gallants whose presence on the stage threatened to overwhelm the dramatic action (Wright 1838, 2: 227–9; Dekker [1884–6] 1963, 2: 203, 246–7; Haynes 1992, 68–76).

Antagonism between citizens and gentlemen was long-standing, but it was given added edge by the dynamics of the city's growth. After a long period of stagnation, London's population began to grow around 1520, and it accelerated rapidly in the late sixteenth century. From a population of about 75,000 in 1550, it increased to 200,000 in 1600 and 400,000 in 1650. It dwarfed other English cities: in 1600 its nearest rival was Norwich with a population of 15,000, and there were only three other cities (York, Bristol, and Newcastle) with populations over 10,000. London also moved up the west European city league tables. In 1550 it was ranked sixth behind Naples, Venice, Paris, Lisbon, and Antwerp; in 1600 it was in third place behind Naples and Paris; by 1650 it was just behind Paris and poised to overtake that city. This increase in London's population was dependent on immigration on a vast scale. Death rates, particularly among infants and children, were very high; life expectancy in the wealthier parishes was between twenty-nine and thirty-six and in the poorer parishes between twenty-one and twenty-six. By 1600, London therefore needed four thousand immigrants per annum to sustain its growth. These migrants came from every corner of the realm, and in larger numbers relative to population

from the poorer pastoral districts in the north; significant numbers also came from overseas, London's stranger community accounting for five to seven thousand people in the later sixteenth century. London was thus a city of immigrants: probably only about one-fifth of its inhabitants had been born there. It was also a youthful city; and in 1600, contrary to the situation which would prevail a hundred years later, it was a masculinized city: 12 percent of the population were apprentices. But there was also a powerful stream of female migration as young women were lured by the possibilities of saving through domestic service, and by the more favorable marriage market which resulted from the capital's skewed sex ratio (Boulton 2000; Finlay 1981, 106–8; Rappaport 1989, 388–93; Hubbard 2012, 16–78).

In the mid-sixteenth century, London had been very much a satellite of Antwerp. Its fortunes rested on its near monopoly control of the export of cloth, the majority of it funneled through the vast Antwerp entrepôt. By the 1540s London accounted for 88 percent of English cloth exports (up from 70 percent in 1510) and possibly 75 percent of all overseas trade; no fewer than 40 percent of London freemen were members of guilds involved in the production, processing, retailing, and wholesaling of cloth. Although cloth exports had surged forward in the first half of the century from 38,600 cloths per annum in the 1490s to 108,100 cloths per annum in the 1540s, the city's fortunes rested on precarious foundations, overdependent on one commodity and on one outlet for that commodity. During the later sixteenth century increasing difficulties with the Antwerp connection encouraged some diversification of trading enterprise: English merchants returned to the Baltic and the Mediterranean, and in 1600 they began direct trading with the East Indies. The expansion of trade was increasingly import-led as the burgeoning incomes of the landed classes fueled rising demand for luxury commodities like silk, sugar, wine, and spices. Imports of wine doubled between 1560 and 1600 and doubled again by 1620; spice imports increased fourfold between 1560 and 1620, sugar threefold, and silk two-and-a-half times (Ramsay 1975; Dietz 1986). The availability of a greater variety of exotic goods and the dizzying fortunes to be made in trade thrilled contemporaries. "All the world choppeth and changeth, runneth and raveth after marts, markets, and merchandising, so that all things come into commerce, and pass into traffic" wrote the merchant adventurer official John Wheeler in 1601. Apologists for the city were less embarrassed by money-making, and deployed ever more concrete images of wealth and commerce. Even a writer as deferential to proper aristocratic virtue as Ben Jonson looked in wide-eyed wonderment on the new goods brought from the East: "China Chaynes, China Braceletts, China scarfes, China fannes, China girdles, China knives, China boxes, China Cabinetts" (Wheeler 1931; Knowles 1999, 133).

London was not only a center of trade. It was also a center of manufacture. Increasing trade fostered a major expansion in the shipbuilding industry. At least £100,000 was invested by the East India Company in new shipping in the ten years after 1607, and the eastern suburbs came to be dominated by the maritime-related trades. Elsewhere in the suburbs manufactures proliferated, testifying to expanding consumer demand: the metal trades were prominent in St. Botolph Aldgate in the shadow of the Tower armories; silk weaving, invigorated by the skills of immigrants, expanded dramatically in the northern and eastern suburbs; and Southwark specialized in the noxious leather trades. Lee Beier has estimated that nearly three-fifths of the capital's adult male population was involved in some form of production in the seventeenth century, compared to one-fifth in exchanges, and another fifth in the transport and service sector. Although the restrictions of the guilds limited the ability of women to participate in the craft economy, they were well represented in less regulated sections of the economy, particularly new industries, and played a key role in victualling alongside their husbands (Beier 1986; Hubbard 2012, 189–234).

The increase in trade and manufactures provides part of the explanation for the capital's renewed growth in this period, but the dominance of imports by luxury goods points to the increasing prominence of the landed elites in the life of the capital. As the author of the *Apologie of the Citie of London* (c.1580) explained, "the gentlemen of all shires do flie and flock to this Citty, the yonger sort of them to see and shew vanity, and the elder to save the cost and charge of Hospitality and house-keeping." The scale of the phenomenon has perhaps been exaggerated; London's pull was not universal, affecting counties closer to London more powerfully, and many gentlemen doubtless shared the sentiments of the North Wales patriarch Sir John Wynn that it was a place best avoided, but there was no doubting the steadily increasing scale of the gentry's engagement with the metropolis, and Wynn was able to use his sons as agents to conduct his pressing London affairs. The magnetism of the capital for the social elites reflected several related developments: the growing centralization of patronage in the royal Court over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the phenomenal increase in litigation in the central courts, which brought the gentry to the capital in larger numbers; the increasing attendance of the gentry at the Inns of Court; and the emergence of a London season around 1590–1630. To the despair of the Crown, anxious about the failure of the gentry to discharge their traditional obligations of hospitality in their local communities, the country's social elite was putting down firm roots in the capital. There was also a tendency for the location of aristocratic and gentle residence to move westward, toward Westminster and away from the city, under the irresistible pull of the Court. Particularly in the early seventeenth century the aristocracy built fine palaces along the Strand. Although most gentlemen visitors to the capital still rented accommodation on a short-term basis, the advent of fashionable housing developments such as Covent Garden in the 1630s brought ever larger numbers to near-permanent residence in the vicinity of the capital. By 1637 there were as many as 242 people (as many as an average English county) with claims to gentility residing in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields alone. As R. Malcolm Smuts has pointed out, it would be wrong to draw the contrast between Westminster and London too starkly. There remained pockets of gentle residence in the city, like St. Botolph Aldersgate, where the Exchequer presence was strong. Although there was an elite core in Westminster, the elite needed servicing, and so a host of tradesmen lived close at hand. But what was lacking in the West End was a powerful mercantile presence (Stow 1908, 2: 212; Ballinger 1926, 94; Warren 2011; O'Callaghan 2007; Smuts 1991, 122; Heal 1988; Merritt 2005).

London offered an increasing range of distractions for its gentle visitors. It was the country's premier shopping center. Shops grew more numerous, more spacious, and more specialized. With the opening of the Royal Exchange in 1568 with its gallery of shops, London acquired its first mall. The correspondence of the gentry is littered with requests for the latest in metropolitan fashion items and luxuries (Fisher, Corfield, and Harte 1990; Peck 2000; Friedman 2000). Gentlewomen were seen as particularly vulnerable to the temptations of metropolitan consumerism. James I noted in 1616 that:

one of the greatest causes of all gentlemen's desire, that have no calling or errand, to dwell in London, is apparently the pride of women. For if they bee wives, then their husbands, and if they be maydes, then their fathers, must bring them up to London because the new fashion is to be had nowhere but in London. (McIlwain 1965, 343)

The emergence of a London season also owed a great deal to the availability of new leisure facilities. Lady Anne Clifford noted of her husband, the Earl of Dorset, that in the capital "he went

much abroad to Cocking, Bowling Alleys, to Plays and Horse Races." By the 1630s pleasure gardens with tree-lined walks and eating places had opened in Vauxhall and Lambeth, "daily resorted and fill'd with Lords and Knights, and their Ladies; Gentlemen and Gallants with their Mistresses." The concentration of so many of the social elite offered unique opportunities for socializing, and it is in the early seventeenth century that the phenomenon of the social "visit" becomes established (Clifford 1990, 43; D. McClure 1980, 138; Bryson 1998, 129–40).

Tensions and Conflict

For all their undoubted economic and social interdependence, there were undoubtedly tensions between London and Westminster. The Westminster tradesmen looked to their aristocratic patrons to protect them against the interference of the London guilds, who in turn saw their suburban competitors as responsible for the devaluation of the benefits of the city freedom. Sir Robert Cecil played on these rivalries when in 1608 he opened the New Exchange on the Strand in competition with the Royal Exchange at the heart of the old city, writing "When I balance London with Westminster, Middlesex, or rather with all England, then I must conclude that London might suffer some little quill of profit to pass by their main pipe." And these aristocratic patrons of fashion in celebrating the opening of their new emporium could not resist some side-swipes at the city's values. Jonson's entertainment for the opening of the New Exchange sought to differentiate it from its rival; the new emporium's motto ("All other places give for money; here all is given for love") distanced the shopping center from commerce and associated it with aristocratic munificence. Londoners, likewise, were aware of the contrast between the values of trade and commerce and those of the Court. In the pageants welcoming James, the citizens were prepared to deny their own identity for the sake of toadying to their new monarch:

London (to doo honour to this day, wherein springs up all her happines) being ravished with unutterable ioyes, makes no account (for the present) of her ancient title, to be called a Citie (because that during these tryumphes, she puts off her formall habite of Trade and Commerce, treading even Thrift itself under foote) but now becomes a Reveller and a Courtier.

The contorted syntax speaks volumes for the difficulties the citizens had in negotiating their relationship with the Court (Stone 1973, 96–7; Dillon 2000, ch. 6; Dekker 1953–61, 2: 281).

Westminster, in spite of the intervention of Parliament in 1585, lacked powerful local institutions governing the whole of the city: the Court of Burgesses established in that year had no power to initiate legislation and was essentially concerned with the policing of petty delinquency. The key players in Westminster government were the parish vestries, and these increasingly fell under the sway of the gentry residents. Power was perhaps more widely dispersed among the social elite after the death of Robert Cecil in 1612 (before then Westminster might be described as a Cecil fief), but it was far more subject to aristocratic interference than London ever could be. The grip of the commercial elites on the reins of London government was in fact extraordinarily firm. Meeting at least twice a week, the twenty-six aldermen controlled routine administration; they retained control over the initiation of city legislation; they disposed of the bulk of the city's patronage; and, assisted by their deputies, they undertook a wide range of police functions in their wards. During the later sixteenth century approximately two-thirds of London's aldermen made their fortunes in overseas trade, while the remainder were domestic wholesalers. There was

no gentry presence in the Court of Aldermen, and the aldermen did not have to face down competing jurisdictions or a military governor in the way that the Parisians did. Venetian visitors reported in wonder on the “republic of wholesale merchants” that governed the city. Courtiers were, of course, only too eager to sink their teeth into the juicy patronage resources of the city, seeking favorable leases of the properties owned by city institutions, or the city freedom and offices in its administration, for their dependents. But the relative lack of Court leverage on the capital meant that Londoners were able to keep them at arm’s length (Merritt 2005; Archer 1991, ch. 2; Archer 2001; Hinds 1909, 503).

Institutional arrangements embodied tensions that were at root economic in nature. George Whetstone warned that the readiness with which Londoners batted on the financial embarrassments of the landed elite resulted in class tensions: “the extremitie of these mens dealings hath beene and is so cruell, as there is a natural malice generally impressed in the hearts of the gentlemen of England towards the citizens of London insomuch as if they odiously name a man, they forthwith call him A Trimme merchaunt.” Many gentlemen found themselves caught in the toils of some “merciless griping usurer,” but their difficulties owed much to the underdeveloped state of the credit market in this period. Interest rates were high; credit was only available for short periods, few moneylenders allowing longer than six months; and creditors protected their loans by the device of the penal bond by which borrowers were forced to acknowledge a debt of double the amount borrowed should they fail to repay the principal and interest by a stipulated day. Mortgages were also fraught with peril, and only a desperate last resort. Borrowers would convey an estate in fee simple to their creditor, and were subject to the proviso that they could reenter only if the debt was paid by the due date. This exposed the borrowers to the forfeiture of the estate if they were as much as a day late with their payment. Only with the establishment by Chancery of the principle of equity of redemption in the 1620s were borrowers protected against forfeiture provided that interest payments were made. The insistence of creditors on the letter of the law inevitably gave them a reputation for rapacity, but they were acutely aware of their own exposure, as regular bankruptcies reminded them of the vulnerability of commercial fortunes. Many members of London’s business elite lent money only as a sideline to overseas trade or domestic wholesaling, but there were specialists like Thomas Sutton (with £45,000 on loan at his death), Baptist Hicke (the Cheapside silk dealer turned money-lender, and eventual Viscount Campden), and Paul Bayning (another beneficiary of the sale of honors, with a staggering £136,700 on loan at his death). These were the men who would have come to mind as Sir Giles Overreach stalked the stage (Whetstone 1584; Finch 1956, 83–92; Stone 1965, ch. 9).

If the gentry despised the merchant classes for their avarice, the grave citizen at the Guildhall despised the prodigality and disorder of the gentleman. We are accustomed to thinking of the problem of order in the capital in terms of the difficulties posed by the apprentices. Sure enough, they were notorious for the festive misrule of Shrove Tuesday and May Day, when their targets included brothels and occasionally theaters; they threatened action against scapegoats for economic ills, like the strangers; and in tense years like 1595 they might call into question the authority of their governors. There were also regular clashes with nobles and gentlemen and their retinues, and sometimes with the Inns of Court. The Venetian ambassador was disgusted by the spectacle of apprentices jeering at those who arrived in coaches to enjoy the spectacle of Lord Mayor’s Day. These clashes, like the one outside the Curtain Theatre, might have owed something to the status uncertainties of apprentices, themselves often younger sons from gentle backgrounds now subject to the sneers of servingmen. We witness in these clashes the competition

over claims to male honor. The honor of apprentices was tainted in the eyes of the gentry and their servants by their menial occupations; the apprentices reacted by vigorously asserting their claim to honor. What is extraordinary about the incidents of violence between them and gentlemen is the apparent solidarity shown by apprentices whose social origins and trades were heterogeneous. The cry “prentices and clubs” seems to have been capable of mobilizing large numbers on the streets (Archer 1991, 1–9).

Clashes between apprentices and gentlemen are usually reported from the biased perspective of the social elite, creating an impression of apprentice provocation. But one might well suppose that the apprentices were provoked by swaggering gentlemen and their loud-mouthed servants. Indeed, the problem of order in the capital owed a great deal more to its gentry residents and visitors than is often realized. William Harrison noted of the gentlemen of the Inns of Court that “the younger sort of them abroad in the streets are scarce able to be bridled by any good order at all.” The Crown’s assertion of the monopoly of violence was a protracted process, and the new honor codes of virtue and civility only gradually displaced the older emphasis on lineage and violent self-assertiveness. Gentlemen and their retainers frequently came to blows in the streets of the capital, especially Fleet Street and the Strand. By the 1590s, with the adoption of the rapier, the spread of fashionable fencing schools, and the appearance of manuals on the art of self-defense, these violent impulses were increasingly channeled into the duel, which was at least confined to the principals alone. But elaborate social codes put gentlemen under pressure to mount challenges for the most trivial of verbal slips. Lodowick Bryskett complained in 1606 that as soon as young men felt themselves ill-treated, they “fear no perill nor danger of their lives, but boldly and rashly undertake to fight”; every tavern quarrel was likely to provoke the “martiall duellists,” claimed Braithwait in 1630. James I’s government struggled against the “bloodie exercise of the duello,” reminding the gentry in a proclamation of 1613 that “the quallities of gentlemen are borne for societie and not for batterie” (Harrison and Edelen 1994, 76; Stone 1965, 223–34, 242–50; Kiernan 1989, 78–88; Bryskett 1606, 100–1; Brathwait 1630, 39–42; Larkin and Hughes 1973).

Gentry violence was not confined to members of their own class but also expressed itself in quarrels with the citizenry, especially in confrontations between rowdy gentlemen and the watch. In 1600, for example, Sir Edward Baynham and his fellow roisterers sallied forth from the Mermaid tavern in Bread Street and set upon the watch, swearing that they “would be revenged of the said citty and that they would fire the citty,” and shouting that they “cared not a fart for the Lord Maior or any Magistrate in London and ... hoped shortly to see a thowsand of the Cittizens throates cutt.”¹ It is a sign of the double standards about gentry violence that when Philip Gawdy reported this episode he downplayed it, explaining that Baynham and his companions were “somewhat merry” (Jeayes 1906, 101). Likewise, the gentry were a major obstacle to the clampdown by the city fathers on immorality. Prostitution was another of the city’s service industries oriented toward them. The correspondence of the gentry shows them to have taken a keen interest in the “heavy newes out of Bridewell” reporting the fate of notorious prostitutes like Mall Newberry and Mall Digby; some were rescued by gangs of gentlemen as they were being carried off to Bridewell. That one of the key justifications for the playhouses was that thereby gentlemen were kept from dicing, drinking to excess, and whoring was scarcely a ringing endorsement of their morals (Jeayes 1906, 99–100, 108–9).

What made gentry disorders so difficult to handle was the inconsistency of Crown and council. The city’s campaign against prostitution was compromised by the protection offered to brothels by key interests at Court, as several brothel-keepers were connected to aristocratic patrons.

The Court traffic in reprieves for convicted felons was the despair of the city's law enforcement officials: "when the court is furthest from England, then is there the best justice done in England," noted Recorder Fleetwood. The hard-line attitude of the city fathers was undermined by the council's support for theaters where drama could be tried out before performance at Court. Likewise, efforts to regulate gambling were undermined by the rights granted to Court concessionary interests to license dicing houses. Nor was the Court establishment keen on citizens disciplining gentlewomen. Perhaps we can understand the heavy fine and imprisonment imposed on the sheriff in 1588 for having a gentlewoman whipped in Bridewell for immorality. But more extraordinary was the way in which the blinkers of social snobbery could prevent the punishment of the more violent members of the elite. The Privy Council criticized the city governors for their refusal to grant bail to a gentleman who had killed the beadle carrying off one Mrs. Moody to Bridewell: impressed that Moody was "a gentlewoman of good birth and ayaunce," they astonishingly concluded that the beadle, "transported violently as it should seem by his own fury," had been at fault and deserved his fate (Archer 1991, 230–3; Wright 1838, 2: 21, 170, 243, 245, 247; Gurr 2000).²

Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality

The force of social conflict was blunted, however, by a number of considerations.³ The Court was not hermetically sealed from the city. The aristocratic palaces along the Strand stood cheek-by-jowl with tradesmen's establishments. Court culture was not always socially exclusive (at least under Elizabeth and James). Tournaments were ticketed events open to those who could afford them; the sermons at Whitehall could attract crowds of five thousand. Both Elizabeth and James were present at select city functions. James, for example, for all his supposed aversion to crowds, attended a lavish feast at Merchant Taylors' Hall in 1607 as part of the entertainment of ambassadors from the Low Countries; he was present at the launch of the great East India Company ship *Trade's Increase* in 1609; he attended the christening of Sir Arthur Ingram's son in 1614; he dined with Alderman Cockayne in June 1616; and he appeared at a Paul's Cross sermon in 1620 to launch the renewal of St. Paul's (McClure 1939, 1: 245, 292, 545; 2: 8, 299). Social mobility (in particular the need for younger sons to make their way in the world) was such that many gentry families had relatives in trade. The lack of juridical definition of the gentry as a class meant that it could accommodate new sources of wealth, including the key mediators between landed and commercial society, the lawyers. The Crown recruited the services of city experts like Sir Thomas Gresham, Sir Lionel Cranfield, and Sir William Russell, and it continued to depend on mercantile contacts for much of its foreign intelligence. The recipients of royal concessionary grants (for example, monopoly rights over forms of industrial production) relied on the services of business intermediaries to implement and enforce their grants. The city's constant quest for contacts in central government ensured that courtiers and government officials were invited to city functions: livery company feasts were crucial in lubricating these relationships. Humphrey Handford, sheriff in 1622–3, gained a reputation for his "magnificall" entertainment of the King's servants and the gentlemen of Lincoln's Inn. In another instance of the interchange of personnel and wealth between city and Court, the Lord Mayor in the same year, Peter Proby, had been Walsingham's barber, enabling the Lord Keeper to joke at his presentation that "he was glad to see such correspondence betwixt the court and the citie that they had made choise of a courtier for their prime magistrate, and the court of a citizen for a principall officer" (McClure 1939, 2: 461, 474, 487).

More positive evaluations of merchants were emerging at the turn of the century. Commentators stressed the lawfulness and utility (in some cases even the nobility) of the merchant's calling. According to the news writer and historian Thomas Gainsford:

the merchant is a worthy commonwealths man, for however private commoditie may transport him beyond his owne bounds, yet the publicke good is many wayes augmented by mutual commerce, forren trayding, exploration of countries, knowledge of language & encrease of navigation, instruction and mustering of seamen, diversity of intelligences, and prevention of forren treasons. (1616, 89)

John Wheeler argued in 1601 that merchants could trade without derogating from their nobility; Edmund Bolton in 1629 denied that apprenticeship was a mark of servitude and praised the occupations of merchants and wholesalers as "most generous mysteries." The moralists showed a greater awareness of the realities of commercial life. Thomas Cooper appended to his published sermon to the Grocers' Company in 1619 a series of cases of conscience: "whether it be not lawful to desire riches and abundance ... whether we may use such meanes for the gathering of riches as man's law doth tollerate ... whether a man cannot live in the world and thrive in his calling without shipwreck of his conscience" (Wheeler 1931, 6–7; Bolton 1629; Cooper 1619).

One of the indications of the softening of relations is the evidence for growing intermarriage between the landed and commercial elites in the early seventeenth century. Gainsford remarked that "citizens in times past did not marry beyond their degrees nor would a gentleman make affinitie with a burgesse: but wealth hath taught us now another lesson; and the gentleman is glad to make his younger son a tradesman and match his best daughter with a rich citizen for estate and living." Lawrence Stone has confirmed that intermarriage between the aristocracy and the merchant class was rare before 1590, but much more common from 1590 to 1630, although (contrary to Gainsford) it was more usual for aristocratic males to marry mercantile women. Alderman Sir William Cockayne's five daughters among them married three earls, a viscount, and a baronet. Such matches were often regarded with unease by both sides. Alderman Sir John Spencer resisted his daughter's match with the feckless Lord Compton and they were forced to elope, while Alderman Sir Christopher Harvey went to extraordinary lengths to avoid the predatory attentions of Sir Christopher Villiers to his daughter. Conservatives within the elite mocked those citizens who tried to "purchase so poore honor with the price of [their] daughter[s]," especially when it meant marrying a man "so worne out in state, credit, yeares and otherwise" as the decrepit Lord Effingham, married to the daughter of the Lord Mayor in 1620. But the existence of such matches testifies to the permeability of the social barriers (Gainsford 1616, 27; Stone 1965, 628–32; McClure 1939, 2: 241, 301, 347–8).

The insistence of some of the landed elite on the maintenance of the social barriers was a reaction to the fact that they were so loosely defined, and so regularly and successfully breached. "Whosoever ... can live idly and without manuall labour, and will beare the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be ... taken for a gentleman," declared the leading humanist intellectual Sir Thomas Smith. So becoming a gentleman was a matter of mastering the code of manners and being accepted as one. The satirists had a great deal of fun at the expense of the citizen who sought to ape the manners of his superiors. In *Every Man Out of his Humour*, Fungoso, the son of the city miser sent to the Inns of Court to become a gentleman, apes the clothes and

manners of the courtier Fastidius Briske, but is unable to keep up because the courtier always has a newer suit which Fungoso cannot afford. Gainsford claimed that citizens:

are never so out of countenance as in the imitation of gentlemen: for eyther they must alter habite, manner of life, conversation and even the phrase of speche which will be but a wrested compulsion; or intermingle their manners and attire in part garish & other part comelie, which can be but a foppish mockery.

But the force of the satire is probably testimony to the citizens' success in mastering elements of the codes, which in any case were only partially adopted by the landed elite (T. Smith (1583) 1982, 72; Haynes 1992, 54; Gainsford 1616, 27).

The realities of social interaction in the metropolitan area were therefore more complex than the antagonistic languages of Court and city would suggest. When we can reconstruct the social milieu of individuals, it is the range of their contacts which surprises us. Sir Humphrey Mildmay, a regular gentleman visitor to the capital in the 1630s, socialized not only with his fellow gentry but also with his in-laws, who had connections with the aldermanic bench. Edward Alleyn, the actor and theater entrepreneur turned gentleman, was as much at ease with the vestrymen of the parish of St. Saviour Southwark as with the Surrey justices; he apparently enjoyed conversation with the Earl of Arundel; he relied on the counsel of Lady Clarke, widow of a baron of the exchequer; his second marriage brought him into the kin of Dr. John Donne; and the spread of his charities across St. Botolph Bishopsgate, St. Saviour Southwark, St. Giles Cripplegate, and Camberwell suggests that he maintained links with the parishes in which he had successively resided and built his fortune. From his "catalogue of all such persons deceased whome I knew in their life time," we learn that the social circle of the city legal official Richard Smyth included fellow legal professionals, aldermen and common councilors, and a great variety of tradesmen. The ties of neighborhood, kinship, and patronage were such that connections were maintained across the social spectrum and often straddled city and Court (Butler 1984, 113–17, 121–4; W. Young 1889; Ellis 1849).⁴

These more complex attitudes were reflected in the drama, which increasingly offers a less crudely antagonistic account of relations between gentlemen and citizens. While Thomas Heywood's London chronicle comedies might celebrate merchant heroes like Sir Thomas Gresham, they did so in a framework which underlined not only the charitable endeavors of members of the mercantile community but also their apparently aristocratic nonchalance and commitment to conspicuous consumption (Howard 2007, 51–8). For all that Middleton's drama often takes Court–city tensions as its theme, it fails to endorse a consistent position in support of the gentry class. In *Michaelmas Term* Quomodo's pretensions are effectively punctured, but his gentry antagonists are not sympathetically presented. Jonson likewise does not confine his satire to the gentry class: his target is the greed and self-delusion present in sections of all classes of society. Citizen comedy to some extent stood in the estates satire tradition. By the 1620s and 1630s, one can detect more positive evaluations of merchant types. Thus Massinger's drama should not be seen as anticitizen. *The City Madam* eventually upholds the values of Sir John Frugal, the merchant who restricts himself to what the law gives him, offers easy terms to those in debt to him, is a supporter of the noble Lord Lacy, and works to cure his daughters of pride above their station. In *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, Massinger is dramatizing tensions within the aristocratic class, as *Overreach* does not embody the traditional city type, given his rejection of civic values like thrift. Although not entirely at ease with the city's new wealth and the mobility

it released, Massinger was willing to explore means by which it could be accommodated within the traditional value system.

The distinctions of social status were clearly a major source of tension in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London, but the realities of permeable social barriers and the emergence of a metropolitan culture transcending status divisions meant that social realities were often more accommodating than the rhetoric of status would suggest (Chakravorty 1996; Butler 1982; 1995).

NOTES

- 1 The National Archives, STAC5/A27/38.
- 2 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton* (1911, 158–9, 568); London Metropolitan Archives, COL/RMD/PA/01/001, no. 318.
- 3 The themes of this paragraph are explored further in Archer (2000a).
- 4 I have developed this argument in Archer (2000b).

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Travel and Trade

William H. Sherman

Of voyages and ventures to enquire.

Bishop Joseph Hall, *Virgidemiarum* (1599)

The extraordinary outpouring of drama between the 1570s and 1640s coincided with the dramatic expansion of England's geographical and commercial horizons. The relationship between these two developments was close and complex – never more so, perhaps, than at the turn of the seventeenth century. The Globe and Fortune theaters (the names of which are especially resonant in this context) were built in 1599–1600, just as the East India Company received its charter and the Virginia Company was granted permission for an English settlement in North America. Those years also saw the first printing of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and the first performances of the (now lost) travel plays *Sir John Mandeville*, *Jerusalem*, and *Muly Molloco*, as well as the culmination of Richard Hakluyt's efforts to publish a corpus of English travel writing. The final edition of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffics and Discoveries of the English Nation* was completed in 1600, and its three large volumes described journeys by English explorers, traders, missionaries, and kings to every corner of the known world.

While Hakluyt made no reference to them in his anthology, Renaissance actors were themselves some of the period's most visible travelers – and not just when they were in character as Italian merchants, Turkish pirates, or Native Americans. Acting was still considered an itinerant profession during the sixteenth century, and tours of provincial and even foreign cities were common until at least the second decade of the seventeenth century. Moreover, theater companies were often structured on the same “joint stock” model as the period's voyages of exploration, in which a small group of investors shared both the expenses and the profits, although very few undertakings of either kind turned out to be profitable during these formative years.

Such striking parallels between the “wooden O” of the Renaissance theater and the “wooden world” of the Renaissance ship can only begin to prepare us for the pervasive interest in travel and trade on the Tudor and Stuart stage. Between 1500 and 1600, more than 140 plays, masques,

and entertainments were printed featuring at least one traveler or trader in the cast of characters.¹ Only a few of these appeared before the 1570s, but in the course of the 1580s and 1590s more than thirty new traveling and trading roles were created. By the time Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* was performed in 1614 – only three years after Shakespeare wrote what is now considered the period's definitive travel play – he could complain about the staleness of "*Tales, Tempests, and such like Drolleries.*" This might simply have been one of Jonson's usual jabs at a rival playwright: in 1622 John Fletcher did not hesitate to take *The Tempest* as his inspiration for two new plays (*The Prophetess* and *The Sea Voyage*), and in the 1630s and 1640s Thomas Heywood, James Shirley, and Richard Brome continued to exploit the theatrical potential of stage-voyages. But Jonson's audiences would already have recognized voyagers and venturers as stock figures.

During the last decade of Elizabeth's reign the praise of merchants became something of a literary vogue (Stevenson 1984, 2), and they remained one of the most common types of character on the Renaissance stage – albeit sometimes in villainous rather than heroic form. The 105 merchants identified in Tudor and Stuart plays by Berger, Bradford, and Sondergard (1998) are surpassed only by soldiers (343), prisoners (168), and citizens (159). Counts of related characters offer even more surprising indications of the period's cultural preoccupations: there are nearly as many mariners (twenty-four) as kings and queens together (twenty-six), and many more travelers (forty) and ambassadors (sixty-four); and there are almost as many usurers (fifty-six, most of whom are foreigners and many Jews) as magicians (thirty-one) and witches (twenty-six) combined.

These statistics provide a crude but effective measure of the presence of travelers and traders on the Renaissance stage. For a more subtle sense of their place in the experiences, imaginations, and anxieties of early modern playgoers we need to turn to other sources. A letter from a London merchant to his agent in Turkey offers a particularly vivid glimpse not just of England's overseas ventures but of the extent to which they were bound up (from the start) with literary representations. Toward the end of August 1606, John Sanderson sent one of his ships to Robert Barton, the Levant Company's representative in Constantinople (Foster 1931, 232–3). The cargo included five chests of tin, which was one of England's principal exports and the one which Sanderson considered "the best commodity" in an uncertain market. In the letter that accompanied the merchandise, he instructed Barton to store it until the price was right. In the meantime – perhaps to secure the credit that fully extended merchants like Sanderson needed to continue trading – he asked Barton to deliver a "jewel in a socket of ivory" and an "Indian candlestick" to a creditor he referred to as "Jacob, my Jew." If "Signor Jacob" was no longer alive, Sanderson explained, the gifts should be promptly returned in a ship whose name – the *Exchange* – recalled both the building in London where foreign goods were sold and the activity which was taking English merchants to ever more distant markets.

For his pains, Sanderson sent Barton a pair of gloves and three books, "one of which I am sure will make you laugh, being *news from Bartholomew Fair.*" Richard West's pamphlet of that title, which had been published just one month earlier, was a long poem in rhyming couplets reporting the death of the fair's fictional tapster-in-chief, Maximus Omnium. Maximus is no ordinary innkeeper but an embodiment of London's expanding trade relations, lubricating the wheels of commerce by sending his ships as far as Turkey and India for "muscadel and good malmsey" – as well as the most expensive and exotic of English imports, "amber & pearl stones" (West 1606, sigs. A2v, B1v).

When Jonson took Londoners on another literary tour of Bartholomew Fair eight years later, he added to the alcohol and gems traded by Maximus a new set of commodities, including cloth, trinkets, tobacco, roasted pigs, and wealthy widows. Like most of Jonson's comedies, *Bartholomew*

Fair depicts a world all but consumed by market forces, and driven by the mobility made possible (in part) by England's investment in commercial ventures. In the play's opening speech, the Stage-Keeper jokes that so many new products were flowing into the English capital from the countryside, the Continent, and even the New World that visiting Smithfield – the home of the fair since the Middle Ages – was now like making a voyage to Virginia.

While it is notoriously difficult to generalize about the playgoers of early modern London, it is safe to say that few of them would have had any real experience of travel beyond their immediate surroundings. Long-distance trips within the country were arduous and often dangerous, and ventures “beyond the seas” were only possible with the patronage of powerful institutions or individuals. As both advocates and critics of travel pointed out, England's physical situation meant that a trip to any country (except Scotland or Wales) required a voyage by ship. Not surprisingly, Elizabethan England struck some contemporaries as an insular nation with no interest in the wider world – or, at best, as a nation of armchair travelers. In 1599, the Swiss physician Thomas Platter visited London on the kind of Grand Tour that was not yet as popular among the English as it would later become. After attending two plays and a bear-baiting, he recorded in his journal, “With these and many more amusements the English pass their time, learning at the play what is happening abroad . . . since the English for the most part do not travel much, but prefer to learn foreign matters and take their pleasures at home” (Parr 1995, 1).

Platter's observation provides an important corrective to the popular image of Elizabethan England as the great age of maritime adventure and imperial expansion. The English were latecomers to the exploring and mapping of the wider world, and by the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign they had achieved virtually nothing to compare to the voyages, settlements, and narratives of Spain, Portugal, Italy, and France. By the end of her reign there were still no colonies and very few signs of an empire that would eventually surpass that of the Iberians and Ottomans; but the English had nonetheless gone some way toward catching up with their maritime rivals. In 1599 the statement that “the English do not travel much” would have seemed a little unfair: two English explorers had successfully circumnavigated the globe (Francis Drake in 1577–80, and Thomas Cavendish in 1586–8); a series of English navigators (including Martin Frobisher and John Davis) had braved the polar regions in search of a northern passage to Asia; English ambassadors had established diplomatic relations with Russian, Ottoman, and Indian rulers; English soldiers and pirates had made devastating attacks on Spanish cities and ships in the Americas; and English colonizers had made plans for several permanent settlements in the New World.

While some playwrights had direct contact with the investors behind these ventures, however, very few of “the English” had first-hand knowledge of their achievements. In a period before daily newspapers and a reliable postal service, they would indeed have turned to plays for stories from distant places. The stage was not the only source for news from abroad, of course; literate Elizabethans could also turn to the growing body of travel literature written by Englishmen (or translated by them from foreign sources), as well as the first significant products of a native map-making industry (including the first globe made by an Englishman and designed specifically to celebrate English discoveries). By the time he published the first version of his *Principal Navigations* in 1589, Richard Hakluyt had already gathered enough material from his countrymen to fill an 834-page folio, covering 93 voyages and spanning 1,500 years; and in the final edition, published between 1598 and 1600, he more than doubled the number of pages and voyages (Quinn 1974).

Hakluyt began his editorial career by translating the existing accounts of European voyagers, but he became increasingly committed to documenting the activities of English travelers.

In dedicating the 1589 edition of the *Principal Navigations* to Sir Francis Walsingham, Hakluyt acknowledged that when he went to France as a young man, “I both heard in speech, and read in books other nations miraculously extolled for their discoveries and notable enterprises by sea, but the English of all others for their sluggish security, and continual neglect of the like attempts ... either ignominiously reported or exceedingly condemned” (1589–1600, sigs. *2–*2v). He intended his collection to set the record straight, proving that the English had not only “been men full of activity, stirrers abroad, and searchers of the remote parts of the world,” but indeed, “in compassing the vast globe of the earth more than once, have excelled all the nations and people of the earth” (sig. *2v). He concluded with a breathtaking survey of the Elizabethans’ stirrings and searchings, pointing to the establishment of trading privileges with the Emperor of Persia and the “Grand Signor” at Constantinople, the placement of English consuls and agents at “Tripolis in Syria, at Aleppo, at Babylon, at Balsara, and ... Goa,” and the passing of “the unpassable (in former opinion) strait of Magellan,” in order to “enter into alliance, amity, and traffic with the princes of the Moluccas, & the Isle of Java ... and last of all return home most richly laden with commodities of China” (sigs. *2v–*3).

Over the next few decades the editorial labors of Samuel Purchas added still more volumes of old and new English travels (Pennington 1997). In 1625 he published a four-volume collection, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrims*, which at that point was the longest book ever printed in England. Hakluyt had been able to include several groundbreaking works of travel writing, including Thomas Hariot’s *Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (published as a small pamphlet in 1588 and republished in 1590 with engravings of American people and wild-life based on the drawings of John White) and Walter Raleigh’s *Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (perhaps the most interesting of the Elizabethan accounts, from both literary and anthropological perspectives). But it was Purchas’ contemporaries who emerged as the first generation of more or less professional travel writers, the most famous of whom were Thomas Coryat, Fynes Moryson, and William Lithgow.

These texts were more often concerned with firing nationalistic sentiments, with soliciting future investments, or – as in the case of Coryat’s endlessly amusing *Crudities* – with entertaining readers than with providing accurate geographical or ethnographic information (Fuller 1995). It should also be remembered that the texts assembled by Hakluyt and Purchas would have reached a smaller proportion of the playgoing public than books describing such marvels as men with heads below their shoulders, romance quests in exotic settings, and Protestant propaganda masquerading as political reportage. As these diverse genres (and the enduring popularity of details from the imaginary voyages of Sir John Mandeville) imply, the line between fact and fiction was rarely clear in English representations of other peoples and places.

In some cases, playwrights and pamphleteers worked hand-in-hand to present breaking news of contemporary travels. In 1607, the adventures of the Sherley brothers were depicted almost simultaneously in Anthony Nixon’s pamphlet *The Three English Brothers* and a play by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins entitled *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (Parr 1995). Robert Daborne’s play *A Christian Turned Turk* (first published in 1612) dramatized the exploits of the English pirates John Ward and Simon Dansiker, and was largely based on two sensational pamphlets published in 1609 (Vitkus 2000, 24). The best-known example, however, is Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611): among the play’s few identifiable sources are three pamphlets concerning the wreck of the *Sea-Adventure* off the coast of Bermuda in 1609, with the Virginia Colony’s new governor on board. Two of these (Sylvester Jourdain’s *Discovery of the Bermudas* and the Council of Virginia’s *True Declaration of the State of the Colony in Virginia*) were published in

1610, but the third (William Strachey's *True Repertory of the Wrack*) was not published until 1625, suggesting that Shakespeare had the interest and connections necessary to read the account in a manuscript copy.

The dramatists were also influenced by the cartographic images of England and the wider world that were newly available in the period's atlases, itineraries, chorographies, and globes; and what Platter described as a preference "to learn foreign matters and take their pleasures at home" had a particularly good pedigree among English producers and users of maps. Thomas Elyot's *Boke Named the Governour* (1531), the most influential guide to the education of English gentlemen, had commended the study of maps from an early age, suggesting that they were essential for the reading of histories because they brought the strange names and boring narratives to life. Maps could bring vast spaces into small rooms, and distant or long-dead people before one's eyes. Not surprisingly, both dramatists and cartographers found ways to exploit this analogy, and while surprisingly few maps appear as props in Renaissance plays, they often influenced playwrights' sense of space and the locations, and dislocations, of their characters (Gillies and Vaughan 1998).

The earliest English travel narratives, like many of the earliest English maps, were concerned with pilgrimages to the Holy Land (Elsner and Rubiés 1999), and, as the religious frame gave way to more secular and commercial ones, this orientation, rather than the more familiar westward drive, informed a surprising number of Renaissance plays (Holland 1996, 166). Even Jacobean city comedy, which charted London's local characters and customs, revived the traditional role of the chivalric knight and appropriated it for merchants and apprentices – culminating in Thomas Heywood's vision, in his *Four Prentices of London* (1615), of a mercer, a goldsmith, a haberdasher, and a grocer wandering across Europe toward Jerusalem.

Christopher Marlowe was the earliest English playwright to attempt a systematic exploration of the dramatic potential of travel. The conquerors, magicians, and merchants in his plays enjoy almost unrestricted movement across the globe, and – like later tales of tempests and shipwrecks – would no doubt have offered compelling fantasies to audiences whose own movement was extremely limited. They would also have served as a powerful vehicle for reflection on England's place in the wider world and, more generally, on the ethics of travel. The fates of Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Barabas suggest that Marlowe's visits to foreign locations were motivated more by edification than escapism. They suggest, furthermore, that travel may have played an important role in unsettling the conventional dramatic genres by emphasizing the tragic as much as the comic potential of the adventure narratives inherited from romantic or pastoral models. Marlowe's plays were also among the first to confront the dramaturgical challenges of presenting global movement in the small and fixed space of the stage (Holland 1996, 160–1), using choruses to take audiences through enormous geographical leaps, and peppering his plays with cartographic details (some designed to place his characters with remarkable specificity, and others to show them transcending geographical boundaries altogether).

Most stage travel offered early modern audiences less challenging experiences of imaginative travel and more comfortable images of the foreign. Crude portraits of exotic "others," with any potential threats dissolved in villainy, stupidity, or pure strangeness, gave playgoers ample opportunity to consolidate their own identities. Daubridgecourt Belchier's *Hans Beer-Pot ... or See Me and See Me Not* (1618) featured a typical character named Abnidaraes Quixot, a "tawny moor" who comes on stage just long enough to sing "a verse or two of a song" and to pronounce a sample of his "language natural": "Hestron, pangaeon, cacobomboton, Aphnes halenon, / Mydras, myphrasman, tyltura, pantha, teman."

This ought to suggest why Nabil Matar has warned against relying exclusively on drama and travel literature as historical sources for England's extensive contact with the Turks and Moors (Matar 1999, 3). But not all plays offered such simplistic portraits as Belchier's, and even Quixot is more complicated than he seems at first. When asked about his origins, he explains that his mother was "Numedian" and his father Spanish, and that he is therefore "A Spaniard, Moor, half Turk, half Christian." Even in passing, and in such apparently superficial plays, Renaissance dramatists offered a troubling sense of the shifting borders of the early modern world, and of the ways in which identities were destabilized by travel (Vitkus 2000, 44; Parr 1995, 10–18).

Almost from the outset, in fact, English readers and viewers of voyage literature could feel a steady undertow of skepticism about the benefits of travel, real or imaginary. If Platter had come to London late enough to see Thomas Heywood's play *The English Traveller* (1633), he would have learned that the English were themselves debating the relative merits of armchair and actual travel. In the play's opening scene, the studious Dalavill ultimately defers to the traveler Young Geraldine:

I have read Jerusalem, and studied Rome,
Can tell in what degree each city stands,
Describe the distance of this place from that –
All this the scale in every map can teach –
Nay, for a need could punctually recite
The monuments in either, but what I have
By relation only, knowledge by travel,
Which still makes up a complete gentleman,
Proves eminent in you.

(1.1.7ff)

But Bishop Joseph Hall published both comic and serious attacks on the wisdom of travel, and the period's definitive antitravel play, Brome's *Antipodes* (1638), features a character whose obsession with Mandevillean wonders can only be cured by an imaginary voyage to the other side of the world. And while Ben Jonson seems to have celebrated England's nascent colonialism and London's incipient consumer culture in some of his masques (especially in the *Entertainment at Britain's Bourse*, written in 1609 for the opening of the New Exchange), he is better known for his satirical attacks on materialism and upward mobility and for his parodies of travelers who all but lose themselves in their pursuit of foreign ideas and fashions.

While Platter had observed that the English were reluctant to travel to foreign shores, he also acknowledged the fact that by 1599 Londoners were deeply involved in global trade: "most of the inhabitants are employed in commerce: they buy, sell and trade in all the corners of the globe, for which purpose the water serves them well" (Orlin 2000, 93). Most of the period's travel was carried out, explicitly or implicitly, in the name of trade. England's early outreach, and its hopes of challenging Spanish control over trade routes and precious metals in the New World, was driven by adventuring and privateering voyages. And the remarkable rise of London as a commercial center was largely due to the expanding scope of English mercantile activity – along with a series of economic crises in the countryside, and the collapse of long-standing European entrepôts in Amsterdam and the Hanse Towns.

England's gradual transition from agrarian feudalism to venture capitalism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought with it a reconfiguration of social relations, new mechanisms of financial exchange (involving new forms of credit and risk), and an increasingly prominent role for

individual entrepreneurs in overseas trade. We should not lose sight of the continuing importance of the internal (or “inland”) trade: at least half of the dominant export commodity, woolen manufactures, remained within the domestic market. But at least two-thirds (and perhaps as much as three-quarters) of the gross national product derived from overseas trade between 1500 and 1700 (Chartres 1977, 10). At the beginning of the period England occupied a peripheral position in the international network of trade, and its mercantile activity was almost entirely dominated by cloth exports to the Low Countries by the Company of Merchant Adventurers (which was not formally incorporated until the second decade of Elizabeth’s reign, but was organizing English trade by the late fourteenth century). After 1550, new markets for English goods and new products for English and European consumers emerged in Russia, Persia, and the Guinea and Barbary coasts, and then in East and Southeast Asia, North America, and the Caribbean.

This expanding network was both reflected in and advanced by the official licensing of new trading companies: the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became the great age of companies chartered for the purpose of overseas commerce and colonization (Griffiths 1974). The Muscovy Company was chartered in 1555 and developed trade with Russia, Persia, and Greenland before its decline at the end of the seventeenth century. In 1576–8 the Cathay Company launched an ill-fated mining venture in the Baffin Bay area. The short-lived Turkey Company and Venice Company lost their grants in 1588–9 and were replaced by the Levant Company, which was chartered in January 1592 and flourished until the eighteenth century. Several African companies pursued a lucrative trade in gold and slaves from the 1530s onward. The East India Company was chartered in 1600 and exchanged currency, silks, and spices on a truly global scale, despite persistent competition from the Portuguese and the Dutch. And the first few decades of the seventeenth century saw the advent of new companies for the explicit purpose of “plantation,” including the Virginia Company (1600), the Somers Island or Bermuda Company (1615), the Plymouth Company (1620), and the Massachusetts Bay Company (1629). The impact on the London economy of the new commodities traded by these companies can be gauged by charting the changes in luxury imports between the 1560s and 1620s. The amount of sugar and tobacco more than tripled; wine, dried fruits, and spices more than quadrupled; pepper more than quintupled; and raw silk imports saw a tenfold increase (Clay 1984, 2: 124–5; Brenner 1993, 25).

By the reign of James I, English merchants were clearly playing an ever more important role in the widening world of European commerce (Brenner 1993, 23–5, 180). In 1618, Thomas Gainsford offered English readers a comprehensive survey of foreign countries, beginning with the Tartars, Chinese, Indians, Persians, and Turks, and ending with the Irish. His patriotic aims are captured in his title, *The Glory of England . . . Whereby She Triumpheth Over All the Nations of the World*, and the source of his pride is fully revealed in Chapter 25 of Book II, on the “greatness of English shipping.” He points to the presence of English merchants in India, Japan, Persia, Africa, Europe, Greenland, and the Americas, and his concluding *tour de force* echoes and surpasses that of Hakluyt:

Is there any place where ever Christian came, or could come, but the English merchant adventured, either for wealth, honor, or conscience . . . so that from one place or other of our country, we have not so few as 1,000 sails of ships abroad: nor so small a number as 100,000 persons dispersed under this acceptable title of merchant. (Gainsford 1618, sigs. X8–X8v)

These accounts, like Hakluyt’s, were hardly objective, and they should not obscure the fact that the English mercantile economy was still extremely unstable in the early seventeenth century

(Supple 1959; Brenner 1993). Renaissance plays engaged with the full range of old and new economic issues experienced by the stage-merchants' real-life counterparts, including the usurious money-lending that extended their credit but involved them in strange exchanges with even stranger characters; the negative balance of trade that drained the country of its hard currency; and the monopolies granted to companies and individuals that increased the gap between the rich and the poor and broke down the collective ideals advocated in the name of the "commonwealth" up through Elizabeth's reign. The new anxieties that accompanied the new mercantile activities were depicted on stage in astonishingly technical detail. It is impossible to follow the incessant economic wordplay of Dekker, Jonson, or Middleton without the help of a glossary of financial metaphors and puns (Fischer 1985). Likewise, a full appreciation of the tensions in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* depends upon a fairly sophisticated sense of the mechanisms for mercantile exchange (Jardine 1996, ch. 6).

There were certainly success stories, such as that of Sir Thomas Gresham, perhaps the period's most successful merchant and most sophisticated monetary theorist (de Roover 1949). Gresham used his wealth to finance the building of both Gresham's College (which played a leading role in the development of geography as an academic subject) and the Royal Exchange. The construction of the latter building was celebrated in the second part of Thomas Heywood's patriotic play, *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1606), and Heywood later produced a series of pageants as tributes to London's trading guilds and institutions: in speeches by such characters as an Indian leading an elephant and the god Mercury (patron of "trade, traffic, and commerce"), he described London as the "fountain of arts and sciences" and the "emporium" for all of Europe (Bergeron 1986).

But the presence of foreign goods and people at Gresham's emporium, the Royal Exchange, once again produced fears that globalization would lead to the loss of English identity (Bartolovich 2000, 14–16). Literary and social commentators were increasingly disturbed by the trade which was bringing other places to London and London to other places. Some inevitably worried that England was importing foreign vices along with foreign commodities, and that English style and language were disappearing beneath foreign clothes and accents. In light of these anxieties, it is especially useful to return to Berger, Bradford, and Sondergard (1998) for one final tally of characters. Perhaps the most surprising figure is the large number of Turks and Moors on the Renaissance stage: forty-five and fifty-five respectively. This is just one fewer than the 101 characters identified specifically as Londoners; when we add the thirty Venetians (and the dozens of others from Milan, Verona, and Malta), it begins to appear that in the plays attended by early modern Londoners local characters were actually outnumbered by the foreigners who were the objects of their fear and fascination.

I will conclude this brief survey by returning to the time and place where I began, in London at the turn of the seventeenth century. Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* was among the plays performed at Court during the 1599 Christmas season, and it contained what may be the period's most potent emblem of the twin forces of travel and trade. The story is set in motion when the goddess Fortune gives a magical purse to a beggar named Fortunatus: like the "Indian mine" and the "Philosopher's Stone" to which Fortunatus compares it, the pouch provides its owner with an endless supply of gold. This newfound wealth allows Fortunatus not only to transform his sons and servants into gentlemen but to travel at will. As in *Dr. Faustus*, a chorus describes a magical tour that reduces the world to a small space, and invites the audience:

To carrie *Fortunatus* on the wings
 Of active thought, many a thousand miles.
 Suppose then since you last beheld him here,
 That you have sailed with him upon the seas,
 And leapt with him upon the Asian shores.

(2.Chorus.8–12)

Fortunatus' travels finally bring him to the Court of the Sultan of Babylon, who has his own source of magical power – a “wishing hat” that instantly carries its wearer wherever he asks to go. Fortunatus persuades the Sultan to let him try on the hat and then wishes himself home, where he displays to his sons the unlikely sources of unlimited travel and trade: “In these two hands do I grip all the world. / This leather purse, and this bald woollen hat / Make me a monarch” (2.2.218–20). After Fortunatus' death, the play descends into chaos as his sons and various French and English noblemen struggle for control over the pouch and hat. Fortune herself steps in to restore order by presenting them in perpetuity to the English Court and transferring her own imperial power over the seas and their riches to Queen Elizabeth. This conclusion could not have been entirely satisfying to a Queen who was about to die without heirs, a country which was suffering from a series of bad harvests and a dearth of cash, and a playwright who had himself been indicted for debt less than twelve months earlier. *Old Fortunatus* is generally considered to be nothing more than a quaint and shallow adaptation of an old German folktale. But Dekker's dramatic parable offers a profound meditation on the uses and abuses of gold at a moment when the English Crown and its financial and foreign relations were under intense pressure.

The voyage- and venture-plays of Dekker and his contemporaries presented new fantasies of mobility – both physical and economic – and newly charged narratives of adventure. By going to the theater, citizens who never left London could travel vicariously to exotic settings for stories of fortunes gained and lost. And while dramatists used these stories to appeal to the civic and national pride of those who paid to see their plays, they also used them to question the benefits of travel, and to examine the ethics of the colonialism and capitalism that would transform their country from an isolated island at the beginning of the sixteenth century into a world power by the end of the nineteenth.

NOTE

- 1 This number is derived from searches of Berger, Bradford, and Sondergard (1998) and the Literature Online (LION) database.

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The Theater and the Early Modern Culture of Debt

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Early Modern Drama and Money

Why are so many late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English stage plays preoccupied with money?¹ What are we to make of early modern playwrights' seeming obsession with the various forms money takes, who has it and who does not, what it means to inherit it, what it means to lose it, the lengths characters will go to obtain and keep it, and what its purchasing power yields for them and their heirs? Why does the resolution of so many of Shakespeare's plays hinge on fiscal reparation? More broadly, what is the relation of dramatic form to economic thought? How did the economic practices of early modern London impinge on the theatrical enterprise? Answering these questions requires a momentary turn away from the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and the theater in which they were performed, in order to consider the crucial economic developments that distinguished early modern England: the emergence of a viable consumer culture, the incidence of inflation, and the evolution of a credit system that over the course of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries gradually transformed an economy of trust into an economy of interest. This chapter will then return to the institution of the theater and the period's drama, which I will analyze in light of an early modern culture of debt.

In Shakespeare's age, a vital consumer culture was taking shape, as domestically produced and imported commodities like silk, tobacco, sugar, coffee, tea, and chocolate were becoming widely available in conjunction with a new class of consumers (Shammas 1993; Brewer and Porter 1993; Fisher 1961; Fisher, Corfield, and Harte 1990; Thirsk 1978). The period between 1580 and 1620 was marked by agrarian changes and urban growth, and witnessed an expansion of manufacture and commerce that resulted in the increased production and consumption of goods.² Keith Wrightson observes that "the interconnected emergence of widespread wage-labour and of a commercial and agricultural middle class ... [who had] a developing taste for superfluities and

the multiplication of ‘wants’” stimulated “the growth of markets, both domestic and overseas; enhancement of the division of labour; competition and the rational employment of accumulated capital ‘for the sake of profit’” (2000, 8). England’s national income doubled between the 1560s and 1640s, even as the distribution of that income was markedly and increasingly uneven. This was the period of the expansion of what social commentators in the 1640s referred to as “the middle sort of people,” that is, a composite body of commercial farmers, prosperous manufacturers, independent tradesmen, and those in the professions of law and commerce. Members of the middling sort were distinguished from landed gentry by virtue of their occupations and distanced from the “meaner sort” below them by their economic clout.

Over the past twenty years, literary scholars have demonstrated that consumer culture provided more than a backdrop to the creative activities of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights. The developing economic contours of English society generally shaped the vicissitudes of theatrical production, influenced day-to-day dealings between hired players and heads of playing companies, and served as a structuring principle of drama itself. The playhouses were located among the bustling extralegal markets populating London’s Liberties in Southwark. Heads of playing companies, like the Rose Theatre’s Philip Henslowe, were simultaneously involved in several commercial enterprises, which included, for instance, running a theater company, an amphitheater for bear-baiting, a second-hand clothing trade, and a small-scale moneylending operation. The sumptuousness and variety of the costumes that adorned the stage indicated the theater’s reliance on a thriving business in second-hand clothes (Stallybrass and Jones 2000), as well as the industry of foreign-born, female cloth workers (Korda 2011). Playgoers could see the material effects of an expansive urban economy in plays that showcased London as a cosmopolitan port city, or that set their action among the shops of London, featuring characters who “took” tobacco and flaunted their urbanity by swallowing precious gems, purchasing exotic pets like monkeys, and competing over the latest style of hat, the attainment of a necklace, or even the most fashionable feather.

Literary critics have come to understand that the economy, as represented by the period’s drama, was not regarded as a timeless, ahistorical phenomenon, but an urgent, specific, contemporary force. We can trace the influence of a nascent capitalist culture, for instance, not only in plays that self-consciously engage debates about valuation, consumerism, and commodity fetishism but also in those dramatic works that turn their attention to issues of patronage, inheritance, usury, poverty, coinage, counterfeiting, marriage, and mercantilism. Moreover, even as plays exploited the language of the market as a source for metaphors, they also experimented with the conceptual possibilities of market relations as determinative of the formal properties of genre.³ Douglas Bruster (1992) has explored how the cyclical loss and possession of commodities drives comedy, while Valerie Forman (2008) has investigated the relationship between the logic of global capital and the redemptive arc of tragicomedy, which was predicated on transforming the potential loss of investment into prosperous gain.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s several landmark studies put an economic approach to early modern English dramatic texts on the critical map. These studies were guided by certain assumptions about the early modern English economy that would come to influence discussions of money in the period’s drama for the next three decades. Explicitly or implicitly influenced by the insights of the philosopher Georg Simmel, who described money as “a concrete and valued substance” and, at the same time, as “something that owes its significance to that complete dissolution of substance into motion and function” (2004, 188), literary critics prompted us to attend to the dual form of money as a material object that served as an actual measure of currency and

as an abstract, fluid symbol that measured any kind of value. The notion that the dematerialized processes of market relations were connected to the motility of persons driving early modern English plays inspired a generation of readers to approach play-texts with an abiding interest in the protean forms of money (Agnew 1986). Money's metaphoric capacities for speculation and liquidity also signaled its alienating effects, exemplified by its unsettling power to introduce categorical instability into many areas of social and personal life. The theater's elaboration of and participation in commodity fetishism, and the commodification of culture more generally, evoked the ways that the conceptual distinction between persons and commodities could be rendered negligible and signaled the displacement of customary social ties by the intrusion of capitalist practices.

The analyses of literary scholars, and the monetary themes they elucidated, rested on a series of presuppositions that in aggregate suggested that despite a given playwright's apparent critique of the commodification of culture, money was ultimately a neutral medium of exchange between legal equals. Critics presumed that all monies in early modern England were the same, that what mattered was the quantity or amount of money and not the type of money being used. Readers also regarded market participants as motivated by the same fundamental impulses of vanity and self-interest (Hirschman 1977). Finally, critics relied on a basic understanding that money ultimately afforded some form of mobility and even self-actualization in the form of enhanced purchasing power, geographical mobility, or even greater latitude for self-fashioning (Newman 1991).

Recently, foundational ideas of what money was circa 1590, what it could do, and how people understood it have been challenged. In order to understand why long-held assumptions about early modern English market relations have been questioned, as well as the significance of new ways of thinking about money for interpretations of early modern drama, we need to consider what was a radical shift in the historiography of economics.

Macroeconomics: The Early Modern English Credit Economy

One product of an increasingly commercialized society was poverty, a growing problem that was aggravated by inflation. The so-called English "price revolution" that began in the middle of the sixteenth century instigated a sixfold rise in prices between 1540 and 1640 (Eagleton and Williams 2007, 167). Throughout the later half of the fifteenth century, prices remained stable. But by the 1550s, the price of foodstuffs and manufactured goods rose rapidly. By 1570, the cost of a hypothetical basket of consumables constructed to reflect most of the basic needs of a typical household was more than three times what it had been at the turn of the century. Average wheat prices, for example, doubled between 1570 and 1630 (Wrightson 2000, 166, 159).

Inflation was exacerbated by a boom in population coupled with the failure of wages to keep up. Analyses of parish registers suggest that the population of 2.98 million in 1561 had grown to over 4 million by 1601, and 5.23 million by 1651; an overall increase of 75 percent. The steep population increase meant changing numbers of consumers and thus an increased demand for goods and labor, but also a shift in the distribution of the population between those households that were self-provisioning and those that met their purchasing needs in the market. At the same time, real wages halved between late fifteenth- and mid-seventeenth centuries. By the 1630s, the real wages of building craftsmen in southern England were reduced to 68 percent of their 1570s value (Wrightson 2000, 159, 128–9, 160).

Historians note that the government's response to inflation created the conditions for a worsening situation for the poor. Taxation increased over the course of the sixteenth century, as it was one of the Crown's primary sources of revenue. Between 1542 and 1551, the administrations of Henry VIII and Edward VI needed to raise vast sums of money to finance wars with France and Scotland. Monarchs also periodically reduced the silver content of coins while retaining their face value, thus undermining trust in currency and resulting in people demanding more coins for goods sold and the charging of higher prices for these goods. According to economic historians, "a flood of silver" entering the European currency system in the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries stimulated the production of new coins in northern Italy and Germany, which then circulated through Venice and throughout Europe, artificially increasing and devaluing the supply of English coins (Eagleton and Williams 2007, 165). Cycles of debasement shook people's confidence in coins as a store of value.

Up until relatively recently, scholarship has remained within the framework of this macroeconomic narrative in telling the story of the early modern English monetary system. However, literary critics and historians have begun to emphasize another heretofore neglected strand of the history of the English economy, a strand that casts a spotlight on the ways that *monies*, plural, were highly variable in an economy that was not coin-driven. Historians have always looked to coin production in developing theories about the evolution of the English economy because they accepted the long-held tenet of economic history that economic exchange as we know it proceeded from a barter economy to a money economy and then, finally, to a credit economy. Importantly, economic historian Charles Kindleberger (1984) overturned this truism that had long dominated the field. Issuing what was at first a revolutionary insight, which soon became the new consensus among contemporary anthropologists, economists, and social historians, Kindleberger laid to rest the conventional idea that money emerged from barter, pointing to the plethora of evidence indicating that a credit economy preceded all other forms of monetary exchange. As the economic historian A. Mitchell Innes writes:

One of the popular fallacies in connection with commerce is that in modern days a money-saving device has been introduced called credit and that, before this device was known, all purchases were paid for in cash, in other words in coins. A careful investigation shows that the precise reverse is true. In olden days coins played a far smaller part in commerce than they do to-day. Indeed so small was the quantity of coins, that they did not even suffice for the needs of the Royal household and estates which regularly used tokens of various kinds for the purpose of making small payments. So unimportant indeed was the coinage that sometimes Kings did not hesitate to call it all in for re-minting and re-issue and still commerce went on just the same. (2004, 27)

The discovery that credit predated barter and all other monetary forms has had a profound influence on historical and literary approaches to the early modern English culture, in which a promise to pay did not necessarily indicate a promise to ante up coins but rather a promise to cancel out debt by an equivalent credit expressed in terms of the borrower's solvency, which could be grounded in metallic coins, land, other goods, or even the debtor's labor or his person.

Recent studies emphasize that material money in early modern England was "functionally unstable" such that coins effectively served as IOUs (Valenze 2006, 2). The standard definitions of "money" as a means of payment, a medium of exchange, a store of value and a unit of account simply do not hold if coins were neither standardized nor ubiquitous. As historian Deborah Valenze writes, "[a] bewildering variety [of coins] jostled for recognition; like struggling dialects,

some managed to retain their value despite changing standards in a multilingual universe” (2006, 1). There were overlapping circulation patterns of individual coinages throughout England, as foreign coins mixed with local currency, and often there was little local coinage in circulation, when, for instance, a small-scale issuer had a more prolific neighbor (Eagleton and Williams 2007, 167). In addition to the problems caused by the overissuing of coins, as older coins remained in currency while debased coins continued to circulate, there were problems caused by rampant counterfeiting as practiced by amateurs as well as by skilled professionals. Moreover, there was no overarching religious or moral justification for regarding coins of the state as inviolable (Gaskill 2003). Monetary indeterminacy was equally evident in paper monies. A staggering variety of bills and notes evolved to fill new needs. Without the existence of a national bank, no single institution could claim a monopoly on the money form.

Microeconomics: The Early Modern English Culture of Trust

As a result of the findings I have briefly outlined, we are now becoming sensitive to the ways that the early modern English economy was fueled by the coexistence of coins and credit. While minted coins stood as the symbol of the monarch’s authority, the relation between the strength of the state and a metallist monetary policy that advocated that profits be reaped from the periodic manipulation of coinage fostered a widespread reliance on credit. The importance of credit to the early modern English economy has been demonstrated most fully by the historian Craig Muldrew. His examination of credit relations among members of rural communities throughout early modern England, shows that the exchange of coins did not comprise the primary medium of business transactions. By providing the first large-scale, systematic study of the social implications of a market economy in which the 500 percent increase in the demand for coins could not be met by the 63 percent increase in supply, Muldrew effectively proves that the economy between 1540 and 1600 revolved around an extensive credit system involving sales credit and personal loans, arrangements that were only periodically reckoned and settled in coin (Muldrew 2001). Shortage of ready money created an early modern society in which “almost all buying and selling involved credit in one form or another,” and “every household in the country, from those of paupers to the royal household, was to some degree enmeshed within ... increasingly complicated webs of credit and obligation” (Muldrew 1998, 95).

As Muldrew ably demonstrates, early modern England was an “economy of obligation,” a skein of interpersonal connections evidenced in networks of lending and borrowing, based in the cultural idea of the household as an economically reliable unit above and beyond its actual financial capacity. The most basic sphere of economic activity in the period involved intensive small-scale dealings among inhabitants of an immediate locality. In rural areas, the commercial extension of neighborliness involved credit, but in larger towns as well, transactions between tradesmen conducted with fellow townspeople were also based on credit, creating a complex web of economic interdependence throughout society. The activities of common consumers revolved around joint indebtedness, and, at the upper end of the social scale, aristocrats were no less entangled in elaborate chains of credit. Even the Crown participated in the culture of borrowing (Leinwand 1999).

Older theories of market individualism were suddenly no longer adequate to represent early modern English commercial activity. While self-interest was a factor, there was also a strong

sensibility of reciprocal obligations and neighborliness. As a result, we have come to think about the economy as a series of processes beyond commodity production and market transactions. In a society in which everyone was simultaneously a borrower and a lender (Muldrew 1998), sustaining one's credit became vital as money functioned not merely as a medium of exchange but also as a social technology. This phenomenon necessitated an entirely new discourse of character and reputation that was folded into ideas about creditworthiness (J. Ingram 2006; Lynch 1998; Hutson 1994; Finn 2003). The behaviors of individuals and entire families were subject to scrutiny as sanctions of exclusion could be invoked against delinquents. It thus became imperative to settle one's debts not simply because it was the "right" thing to do but also because the entire credit network depended upon everyone honoring their word.

Muldrew's articulation of the social importance of credit relations, and their invocation of communal trust, reoriented historical and literary perspectives on the role of money in English society and the English imagination. Expanding beyond what heretofore had been typically understood as the pecuniary function of money, narrowly defined, scholars have become less interested in providing a systematic account of the history of coinage and mercantilist manuals and instead are investigating the ways credit constituted relations among people within and across a variety of nonpecuniary (cultural, social, political) spheres.

An Early Modern Culture of Debt

Muldrew's study has had lasting influence not only in regard to how we currently conceive of the early modern English economy but also in regard to our sense of the theater's unique response to and participation in it. Scholars have sought to build on Muldrew's analyses of the ways that credit transactions structured social relations. For Muldrew, "reciprocal obligations of neighbourliness" and mutual trust cut across class lines and cushioned the inequities of status (1993, 163, 178). But distinctions of status could – and did – leave their imprint on credit transactions. Social and economic historians and literary scholars have emphasized that while we have attended to networks of credit, we have underestimated the impact of indebtedness on English culture and literary imagination (Reddy 1987; Leinwand 1999; Finn 2003; Korda 2011; Bailey 2013).

The most significant implication of the discovery of the extensive nature of an early modern culture of credit has been related findings about a wide-scale early modern culture of debt. A functioning credit economy needed every participant to maintain their creditworthiness; only then could society be confident in the value of its bonds and could all members have some grounds, either by convention or compulsion, to accept each other's claims to creditworthiness. Thus the existence of a credit economy ultimately necessitated the existence of a third party, such as the state, to negotiate and endorse credit arrangements so that debt could be transferable. The credit-worthiness of this third party did not necessarily rest on its ability to earn credit in the marketplace but rather on the strength of its authority and its willingness to exercise its power beyond the arena of the marketplace. This explains the early modern English state's readiness to punish the debtor as a means to stabilize the credit economy, as well as the state's inclination to turn debt itself into a saleable commodity. Arguably the gradual shift from bilateral credit arrangements dependent upon a debtor's credit-worthiness to a system in which creditors came to rely upon a third party, for instance, a national bank or the government willing to accept a debtor's IOUs in payment marks a watershed moment of the early modern English economy.

Long before the institutionalization of debt, not all participants in credit relations dealt with one another on an equal footing, and, indeed, a culture of credit could and did reinforce established hierarchical and adversarial relations and create new social asymmetries. Moreover, certain kinds of credit relations could resemble coercive arrangements. Not every lender, or borrower, was motivated by the same impulse, nor were the outcomes of such relations predictable. Networks of credit instilled mistrust as well as trust. Thus, if the early modern culture of credit strengthened social cohesion, it also instituted a regime of gentle violence (Finn 2003).

In this period, there was an unprecedented spike in frequency of imprisonment for debt (Muldrew 1998, 275). The number of debt cases that moved into advanced litigation in the common law courts of the Queen's Bench and Common Pleas escalated from 5,000 a year in 1560 to over 20,000 cases annually by 1606 (Brooks 1986, 69). The anonymous author of a 1647 petition to Parliament advocates for the 10,000 Englishmen and women languishing in prison for debt, while another pamphlet laments the "millions of [debtors] in this Land [that] are oppressed, enslaved, ruined, yea destroyed in their Estates, Rights, Liberties, and Lives" (Anselment 1991, 3). Imprisonment was the fate of those who defaulted on as little as ten shillings as much as it was for those who owed hundreds of pounds. In every case, the incarcerated person was incapable of earning the money necessary to satisfy his debt, and his stay in prison added to his indebtedness since he was responsible for his own maintenance. London jails were owned and leased by city authorities that rented them out as franchises to wardens, who, in turn, charged exorbitant fees for rent and food. The Royal Patent of 1618 emphasizes the illogic of a system that overwhelmed prisons with

the Bodies of those persons whose imprisonment canne noe waie avail their Creditors, but rather is an hinderance to the Satisfaction of their Debts, for that, during the tyme of their Restrainte, they are in no wise able to goe aboute or attende their lawfull Busynes, but must of force consume themselves and that little they have miserably in prison. (Shaw 1947, 373)

Another petition on behalf of insolvent debtors presented to Parliament marvels that

A man who shall be arrested for some trivial debt of forty or fifty shillings, shall be compelled to lie in prison there till his very chamber rent amount to thrice the value of his debt. ... there are as many men, very neere, that are condemned to perpetual imprisonment for their fees, as suffer that misery for their debts. (*Petition* 1643, sig. A3)

Whereas on the Continent debtors could not be detained for more than one year, in England those who spent only seven years in prison were counted among the lucky.

By the late sixteenth century, debt bonds were fast becoming "by far the most important form of indebtedness after sales and service credit, certainly much more important than moneylending" in the period (Muldrew 1998, 109). The sealed bond, composed on parchment in Latin or English and often but not always drawn up by a scrivener, was a formal document that allowed the creditor to build legitimately into the contract compensation for the loss he stood to suffer were the debtor to fail to repay on time. The increased use of conditional bonds in the last decade of the sixteenth century suggests that creditors turned to this form of lending to accommodate, and arguably even to capitalize upon, an epidemic of default, since lenders stood to profit when their borrowers were unable to repay their loans. Loans on

sealed bonds were devised for fictitious sums that included both principal and an additional sum called the penal sum, which, significantly, was not construed as interest. The penal sum, sometimes called the security, was usually twice the amount of the loan and was “defeasible,” meaning that if the debt was paid by the agreed-upon date, then the borrower owed only the principal.

However, if the condition of the bond was not met and the debtor was insolvent, then the creditor, unable to collect either the penal sum or principal, could lay claim to his debtor’s person. In late sixteenth-century England, when a borrower had no other asset at his disposal, he became a pledge or “an animated gage” (Pollock and Maitland 1968, 2: 186). As Muldrew stresses, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, most actions were taken against the debtor’s person (1998, 275). While this was partially because the feudal principles of land tenure did not permit estates to be regarded as assets for debt, the rise in imprisonment for debt speaks to the state’s increasing interest in safeguarding local credit arrangements. Bonds were judicially processed with minimal jury involvement, allowing common law courts to quickly process an impressive number of debt cases, and by the middle of the sixteenth century, any creditor could initiate the apprehension of their debtor without having to first obtain judgment against them.

As with any deed that included a penal clause, the bond’s efficacy rested on the threat of harm. Usually the prospect of indefinite incarceration was enough to convince the fraudulent debtor to reveal any hidden assets, or to pressure friends, family, neighbors, and employers to come forward. If the insolvent languished in prison over time, paying, like all other prisoners, for room and board, a creditor could hope that the escalating costs of prison would break those who withheld funds, or that a charitable entity or eventual inheritance would satisfy the outstanding debt. In the meantime, the incarcerated debtor proved profitable to various prison administrators that depended on a steady influx of fees and bribes. In lieu of imprisonment, the lender could delay enforcing the bond’s penalty, which potentially entailed imprisonment for the debtor, and earn money off a loan by charging the tardy debtor a fee for forbearance. This is how lenders profited off those with poor credit; as Francis Bacon complained, creditors “value unsound men to serve their own end” (qtd. in Kerridge 2002, 8).

Perhaps we need to attend more closely to the widely embraced proverb of the period: “He that hath lost his credit is dead to the world” (*Le Denier Royal* 1620; qtd. in Valenze 2006, 67–8). Or to the exchanges in Henry Peacham’s *Worth of a Penny, or A Caution to Keep Money* (1641), a chapbook for the educated young man of London, which provides a window on views about credit transactions in the period. In this booklet, Peacham objects to the “general scarcity” of money and understands borrowing on credit as a source of misery: “That miserie is ever the companion of borrowed money,” and “[a] miserable thing it is, to owe mony to him, to whom thou wouldest not.” The debtor, he emphasizes, is “undervalued, despised, deferred, [and] mistrusted,” existing in stark contrast to those who are “bold, confident, merry, lively, and ever in humour” who “drink because they can walk abroad when they will, not being dogged by sergeants-in-arms hired by unpaid creditors, eat and drink whatever they wish” as their “minds, so their bodies are free” (Valenze 2006, 154–7). The remainder of this essay will sketch out two interpretative innovations that emerge from approaching early modern drama in light of the period’s culture of debt. The first involves a historical reevaluation of the early modern playhouse itself as an institution imbricated in a debt economy; the second entails an overturning of what I call a “usury theory” of early modern culture.

Early Modern Drama of Debt

The early modern theater was an enterprise shaped by the exigencies of credit generally, but more particularly the business of playing revolved around managers' and players' reliance on debt bonds. Bonds enabled the building and leasing of playhouses. Play-scripts, costumes, and stage properties were obtained on bonds. And it was through the Articles of Agreement, known as the player's bond, that theatrical managers secured their labor. Like any savvy playhouse owner, Philip Henslowe, manager of the Rose Theatre, devised bonds in order to control what was arguably his most precious commodity: the player's body. The lynchpin of the player's bond was its monetary penalty, and each player agreed to forfeit the impressive sum of £100 if he left the playhouse before the term of his indenture expired. The penal condition of the performance bond figures prominently, for example, in the contract between Henslowe and Thomas Downton, devised on October 6, 1597:

Thomas dowten came & bownd hime sealf unto me in xxx li a some sett by the Receiving of iii d of me before wittnes the covenant is this that he shold ... come ii yeares to playe in my howsse & in no other a bowte London publickeley yf he do with owt my consent to forfet unto me this some of money above written. (qtd. in Rutter 1999, 58)

The provisions of the player's bond were suited to the specific needs of the theatrical enterprise, yet from a legal perspective this particular kind of bond was no different than a conditional debt bond. Operating outside of a context of breach of promise, the efficacy of the bond lay in its ability to leverage the player's body as property on pain of forfeiture. In the 1615 "Articles of Grievance," which company members drafted when relations broke down between them and Henslowe and his then partner Jacob Meade, Henslowe is singled out in the second half of the document, entitled "Articles of Oppression against Mr. Hinchlowe." Here Henslowe is charged with binding hired men in his own name, entering players' personal debts against the company's accounts, and requiring an exorbitant amount of money for security for players' bonds. Henslowe's use of bonds seems to have produced a scenario in which Henslowe threatened on several occasions to "break" the company or disband it through forceful means.⁴ Conflating the corporate body of the company with the individual body of the player/debtor, the players stress, ominously, that Henslowe "wth in 3 yeares ... hath broken and dismembered five Companies." Moreover, according to members of the Lady Elizabeth's Men, Henslowe had the audacity to state publicly, "should these fellowes Come out of my debt, I should have noe rule wth : them" (Greg 1907, 90, 89).

After performance bonds, conditional debt bonds dominate Henslowe's transactions with players who rotated in and out of debtor's prison, such as Richard Jones, Thomas Downton, William Bird, and Robert Shaw. Nathan Field, Robert Daborne, John Duke, and William Haughton also seem to have regularly borrowed money from Henslowe, as did Ben Jonson, George Chapman, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton, and Philip Massinger. Henslowe was not the only manager involved with the details of debt litigation. In 1578, for instance, John Brayne (brother-in-law of James Burbage) devised a bond with Burbage for £400 to guarantee the lease of the Theatre and a share of the property. Burbage was subsequently arrested for debt in 1579, and then again in 1582 (Ingram 1988, 203–4). Insofar as Henslowe's accounts reflect the professional players' and writers' propensity to spend liberally on drinking and dining, as well on the costs of play readings at inns and taverns, Henslowe clearly had a vested interest in

covering his players' existing debts or ensuring their discharge from prison so they could honor the terms of their performance bonds (Korda 2011, 65–6). Yet the liberty and life of indebted players remained at his discretion as a debtor could be released from his obligation only by the issuance of a "quitclaim," which effectively voided the original bond and formally extinguished the proprietary right the lender had in the borrower. In this respect, a creditor could exercise more power over his debtor by holding back from imprisoning him.

An understanding of the various ways that the institution of the early modern theater was steeped in a debt economy, and playwrights' familiarity with indebtedness and debtor's prison, bring us into contact with a complex economic order based on expansive networks of credit and interpersonal obligation but also heightened incidences of indebtedness and default. Heretofore we have not been attuned to the wide repertoire of concepts that early modern men and women employed for understanding the complicated processes and implications of lending and borrowing money. Importantly, not all forms of moneylending were considered usurious. Even the word "usury" was a more slippery term than we have assumed. In common parlance, usury referred to the charging of an excessive rate of interest, but in this period, the word "interest" was coming to signify the legitimate charge for lending either by verbal agreement or through the devise-ment of a written bond.

While authors of religious tracts denounced usury as a sin, authors of economic and political manuals who wrote about lending and borrowing in the context of local and international markets distinguished between "usury and trewe interest," "interest" referring here to the lender's return that compensated him for his potential loss (Kerridge 2002, 5). Moreover, early modern men and women delineated several kinds of use. For instance, in overlaying a contemporary perspective on lending and borrowing, we forget that money was seen as a form of property and that laws governing lending and borrowing grew out of property law, a series of laws regulating the leasing of land. In typical cases, a borrower could tolerate being charged some amount for the use of that over which the lender retained ownership. In this respect, a creditor rented out his money. Along the same lines, no one would object to a lender charging a fee in compensation for the nonpayment of a loan. This would be remuneration in the event of loss or the destruction of one's money/property. Thus lenders were entitled to *damnum emergens* (emergent loss or damages), which would eventually become the basis of tort law. This right was most commonly exercised through *poena conventionalis*, in which a debt bond stipulated that a penalty would be paid in the event of delayed or nonpayment of the principal. The penalty was typically a percentage of the amount borrowed. If the debt was repaid on time, borrowers were not obliged to pay anything for the use of the money. In the case of default, in which the borrower could not repay any of the amount borrowed, the lender could then take legal proceedings to recover the principal. This whole system was analogous to a modern credit card, whereby the debtor only owed interest if he failed to repay on time.

The moral issue of the day, then, may not have been the avaricious behavior of so-called usurers, but the ethical behavior of those who were obliged to pay their debts. Thus market relations may have been perceived less in terms of the pursuit of private advantage and more as the expression, and problem, of interdependence insofar as society itself was seen as an aggregate of relationships bound together by trust. Literary scholars have presumed that debtors were hapless victims of vengeful usurers, but debt readings of early modern drama bring into sharp relief the high stakes of default in a society in which everyone at some point in his life was at once a creditor and debtor, and everyone at some point in his life became unwilling or unable to honor his bonds. Perhaps we should have sympathy for the lender who was forced to pay out extra money

to travel great distances in order to track down his borrower and collect his money; who incurred impressive scrivener's fees and accounting costs in devising a loan that was never repaid; or who having himself experienced calamity, such as a damaged home or failing crops, was without money for repairs. A debtor's default might even necessitate that the lender himself take out a loan with a creditor. In such cases, a lender could claim *lucrum cessans*, or opportunity cost, since the borrower's inability to repay on time inhibited the lender from recouping profit due to extenuating circumstances. We would hope that in such cases a court of law or the state would uphold the lender's claim.

Taking such concerns into account necessitates that we adopt a new perspective toward those early modern plays typically associated with usury, such as Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The monetary instrument that stands at the center of *The Merchant of Venice* would have been immediately familiar to members of Shakespeare's audience. Antonio and Shylock enlist the services of a notary to assist them in devising a debt bond, which, as Shylock explains, must be honored "on such a day, in such a place, [with] such sum or sums as are expressed in the condition," or "the forfeit [will] be nominated" (1.3.137–41). In other words, if Antonio had repaid his loan on time, he would have been exempt from the bond's penalty, and Shakespeare's play would have been resolved by Act 3.

The Merchant of Venice's fascination with bonds and the difficulty of honoring them may be gleaned from the frequency with which the word "forfeit" appears. A term inextricably connected with both the words "justice" and "mercy" throughout the play, "forfeit" appears in fifteen different contexts. Shakespeare calls our attention to "forfeit" at the moment of the signing of the bond, in which "the forfeit [to] be nominated" is "an equal pound of [Antonio's] fair flesh" (1.3.140–2); in Act 3, Antonio stresses that he "oft delivered" Shylock's borrowers from their "forfeitures" (3.3.22); Shylock insists on his "forfeiture," "justice," and "his bond" (3.2.281). Yet when the word next appears, "forfeit" is no longer distinguished from "justice" and the "bond" but serves as a synonym for both. At certain moments, "forfeit" becomes synonymous with the borrower's flesh, as for instance when the Duke urges Shylock to exercise mercy and "loose" or waive his right to "the forfeiture" (4.1.24). Shylock, however, is determined "to cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there" (4.1.122). By the end of the trial, Shylock's wealth is "forfeit to the state" (4.1.360). In the final Act, the characters are safely ensconced in Belmont and putatively insulated from the commercialism of Venice and the legalism of the court, yet Portia discovers that her ring has been forfeited. The ring plot is not resolved until Antonio pledges his soul as "forfeit" (5.1.250).

Perhaps, with an enhanced awareness of the various meanings of "interest" in the period, it is time to revisit the conversation between Antonio and Shylock in which in response to Antonio's insistence that Jacob took "interest" (1.3.66), Shylock impatiently replies that Jacob did "not take interest, not as you would say / Directly interest" (1.3.67–8). Or perhaps we are able to see the trial in a new light when the lawyer, Balthasar, is the first to admit, "this bond is forfeit, / And lawfully by this the Jew may claim / A pound of flesh" (4.1.225–7), acknowledging before the court that Shylock's claim over Antonio is not a deviation from debt jurisprudence but an amplification of its proprietary logic. As Balthasar emphasizes, "the intent and purpose of the law hath full relation to the penalty" (4.1.243). What are we to make of the play's conclusion when upon his return to Belmont, Antonio's status as a bound person persists? Even after Shylock has exited the play, having been effectively vanquished, Bassanio introduces Antonio to Portia as the man to whom he is "infinitely bound" (5.1.133), only to have Portia correct her husband by reminding him that he remains bound to Antonio, since Antonio "was much bound for you"

(5.1.135). It soon follows that the only way to resolve the crisis engendered by Bassanio's admission that he remunerated the lawyer with his wedding band is for Antonio to offer himself once again as a "surety" for his friend (5.1.252). When Bassanio attempts to justify his marital deception as a false "oath of credit" (5.1.244), the stage is set for another bond, and Antonio steps forward to pledge himself, yet again, as collateral:

I once did lend my body for his wealth,
Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,
Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will nevermore break faith advisedly.

(5.1.247–51).

Conclusion

A more accurate and holistic understanding of an early modern culture of debt opens our eyes to new aspects of plays that otherwise would seem to have been exhausted by economic interpretations. Attending to an early modern debt economy and the theater's participation in it also casts a spotlight on plays that heretofore we did not consider relevant to an economically inflected approach. Debt readings may allow for more complex understandings of the ways that plays stage economic problems, and even the ways that early modern English culture defines economics as an arena that includes moral and ethical conundrums revolving around dependency, freedom, and hierarchies of value. Have we incorrectly designated a character as a usurer who should be seen as a creditor? How do such distinctions sharpen our approach not only to the moral architecture of a play but also to the details of the fiscal and social transactions structuring the drama? On the stage, owing someone money could lead to the reinforcement of social inequity, the justification of physical abuse, and the subordination of one person to another. An awareness of a debt culture may ultimately enrich historical approaches to the affective experience of play-going. What did it mean to watch a play about default knowing that one's own bonds are overdue? What did it mean to attend the theater sensing that one's own debtor may be out there hiding in the crowd?

NOTES

1 While not an exhaustive list, scholars have written about the following Elizabethan and Jacobean plays in light of markets, credit, and, more generally, the effects of commodification on political, moral, and affective life: Shakespeare's *King John* (1596), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Measure for Measure* (1604), *Timon of Athens* (1607), *Comedy of Errors* (1589), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1600), *1 Henry IV* (1597), *2 Henry IV* (1597), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593); Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Me, You Know*

Nobody, Parts I and II (1605–6) and *A Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607); Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), *Everyman Out of His Humour* (1599), *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), and *Volpone* (1605); Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho* (1605); Philip Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625); Thomas Middleton's *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (1611), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1606), *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), *Michaelmas Term* (1605), and *A Mad World, My Masters* (1605); Christopher

- Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1590); Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London* (1584); William Haughton's *Englishmen for my Money* (1598); Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1611); and Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599).
- 2 In addition to an unprecedented expansion in population and greater geographical mobility (Harding 1990; Sweezy et al. 2006; Aston and Philpin 1985; and Macfarlane 1978), the enclosure of open fields in large areas of England and their conversion to pasture, the expansion of manufacturing industry in countryside, and the flourishing of intercountry trade contributed to England's becoming a nation ripe for the development of a sophisticated market society (Beier and Finlay 1986; Spufford 1988; de Roover and Kirshner 1974; Miskimin 1989; Vilar 2011).
 - 3 The "New Economic Criticism" was the phrase designated by Woodmansee and Osteen (1999) for studies of the ways literature and economics can illuminate each other. See also Woodbridge (2003).
 - 4 "Articles of Oppression," in Greg (1907), 86–90. In such situations of financial duress, "breaking" a company allowed a playhouse owner to recoup individual forfeitures, as well as company debts, by retaining the extremely valuable costumes, properties, and playbooks.

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Vagrancy

William C. Carroll

The poor lie in the streets upon pallets of straw ... or else in the mire and dirt ...having neither house to put in their heads, covering to keep them from the cold nor yet to hide their shame withal, penny to buy them sustenance, nor anything else, but are permitted to die in the streets like dogs, or beasts, without any mercy or compassion shown to them at all.

Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of the Abuses in England* (1583)

Be it also enacted ... That all and every person and persons ... being ... Rogues, Vagabonds or Sturdy Beggers ... shall be adjudged to be grievously whipped, and burnt through the gristle of the right Ear with a hot Iron of the compass of an Inch about, manifesting his or her roguish kind of Life ... [If] the said person or persons so marked ... do eftsoons fall again to any kind of Roguish or Vagabond Trade of Life, that then the said Rogue, Vagabond, or Sturdy Begger from thenceforth to be taken, adjudged, and deemed in all respects as a Felon ... [if found guilty a third time they shall] suffer pains of Death and loss of Land and Goods as a Felon without Allowance or Benefit of Clergy or Sanctuary.

14 Eliz. I, c. 5 (1572)

It is necessary to be declared unto you, that by the ordinance of God, which He hath set in the nature of man, every one ought in his lawful vocation and Calling, to give himself to labor: and that Idleness, being repugnant to the same ordinance, is a grievous sin ... Idleness is never alone, but hath always a long tail of other vices hanging on, which corrupt and infect the whole man.

“An Homily against Idleness” (1595)

Philip Stubbes’s horrifying description of the scene of poverty in sixteenth-century London, the first epigraph, is just one of many such contemporary accounts of the desperate condition of the poor;¹ even in an age that must have witnessed far more everyday poverty and violence than our own, similar expressions of compassion and moral outrage were common. Yet compassion was in the eyes of the beholder. Other observers, viewing the vagrant poor, saw them not as isolated and pathetic, but as a potentially dangerous threat to civil order; their desperation, it was argued, led directly to crimes

against the person – “Men will steal, though they be hanged, except they may live without stealing,” reported Richard Morison (1536, sig. E3v) – and to larger crimes against the state.

The Privy Council, in a letter of 1571, went even further in identifying the vagrant poor as the source of virtually all crime: “there is no greater disorder nor no greater root of thefts, murders, picking, stealing, debate and sedition than is in these vagabonds and that riseth of them” (Aydelotte 1967, 157).² Thus the second epigraph, from the 1572 “Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds, and for Relief of the Poor and Impotent,” reflects a quite different aspect of the early modern attempt to control the vagrant poor, while distinguishing between those who were truly destitute and those who were said merely to “counterfeit” (in the most common term of the period) poverty. From 1495 (11 Hen. VII, c. 2) through the eighteenth century, Parliament passed a series of statutes that, with evident futility, attempted to contain and control the vagrants of the kingdom. Each successive Act recalibrated the modes and intensity of punishment to be meted out, while also broadening but also hardening the categories of the vagrant. Whipping, branding, ear-boring, special colored badges, and other efforts attempted to mark the vagrant body with a legible sign, while other statutes introduced desacralized concepts of charity to succor the deserving poor. Perhaps the nadir of punitive modes was the 1547 Act (1 Edw. VI, c. 3), which introduced the idea that a captured vagrant, once judged guilty, could be turned into a “slave” (the term is actually used) and, if caught and convicted after running away, would become “the said Master’s Slave for ever.” So extreme was this statute as a whole that its harshest provisions were rarely if ever enforced (Davies 1966) and repealed a few years later (3/4 Edw. VI. c. 16).

The third epigraph, from the “Homily against Idleness,” indicates a powerful theopolitical position that attempts to define an essential element of human nature and divine will. These assertions about God’s ordinance and man’s “Calling” to work were promulgated through official national policy, as such homilies were ordered to be read from the pulpits in every church in England. They admonished all to work, remain in their place, respect authority, and above all subscribe to the strictures of obedience. Still other writers (though certainly a minority) urged that charity should be given to any that even seemed to be in need, since the benefit of giving redounds to the one who gives as much as to the one who receives. As John Donne asked in a sermon, “How shall thou know whether he that asks be truly poor or no? . . . my mistaking the man shall never make God mistake my meaning” (Potter and Simpson 1953–62, 8: 277).

Perceptions of the poor, and hence how they were represented in cultural texts, thus varied enormously in early modern England, but one thing is clear: official discourse made hard and clear distinctions between the deserving poor and the fraudulent or “counterfeit” vagrants who, it was asserted, merely performed poverty, gulled the naive public, corrupted public morals, promoted sedition, spread disease, and in general undermined the commonweal. The deserving poor stayed in their place, while the hallmark of the undeserving poor – those who threatened all forms of order – was their vagrancy. The vagrant’s status alone, wholly apart from the active commission of any crimes, made them guilty.

Historical Contexts

“The poor always ye have with you,” according to John 12:8, and numerous texts from the medieval period lament the numbers and condition of the poor. To observers in the sixteenth century, however, it seemed as if the numbers of the poor were increasing, and that they were not simply

the old and infirm of the villages, but a more threatening, explicitly vagrant type. One of the standard terms for such figures – “masterless men” – conveys the social and class dislocations implicit in the problem. But were there, in fact, a greater number of poor in the sixteenth century than in the past?

The available evidence, most historians conclude, reflects a genuine crisis of poverty in the early modern period. Political, social, economic, and religious forces seem to have converged, producing painful changes, and casting more and more people into desperate conditions. One of the major factors in this change was the considerable growth in population during the century – an increase of nearly one-third during the forty-five years of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, for example. Population growth can, in the right conditions, prove a stimulus to economic growth, but while some new markets were created, the larger population could not be properly sustained and fed. Although the country as a whole suffered, London’s situation was vastly more serious: the general growth in population was exacerbated by an enormous internal immigration to London. Perceived as a place where jobs or some form of relief might exist, London became a magnet for the dispossessed of the kingdom, and its unregulated growth led to the deplorable conditions lamented by Stubbes and others.

The steady growth in population – checked only by recurring epidemics of the plague – was accompanied by an inflation of prices so severe that some historians refer to it as a “price revolution.” Rising costs of basic necessities such as food or rent devastated many people; symbolic of this crisis, even the official coinage was debased, with gold and silver coins adulterated with baser metals. Changing patterns of land ownership and usage also contributed significantly to the creation of a class of vagrants in the kingdom. The concept of “enclosure” – the term could stand for any of several different agricultural practices, virtually all considered destructive – was identified as early as Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) as the leading cause of displacement and vagrancy: parasitical landowners, according to the narrator Hythloday, have enclosed “every acre for pasture” of land that had previously been held in common, leaving “no land free for the plow.” The effects of even a single landowner can be enormous: one “greedy, insatiable glutton ... may enclose many thousand acres of land within a single hedge. The tenants are dismissed and ... forced to move out.” When their money runs out, “what remains for them but to steal, and so be hanged ... or to wander and beg? And yet if they go tramping, they are jailed as sturdy beggars. They would be glad to work, but they can find no one who will hire them.” What can such men do “but rob or beg? And a man of courage is more likely to rob than to beg” (More [1516] 1975, 14–16). The enclosure movement signified an important economic shift from farming to grazing; the wool industry became, ironically, the economic engine that powered the English economy in the later sixteenth century, creating in substantial ways England’s economic wealth and political power. Still, for those not part of the new economy, conditions became very bleak. The period saw an increasing gap between those fortunate enough to enjoy the new wealth, and those left behind.

Early in the sixteenth century, most of the poor were cared for by local church parishes and the monasteries throughout the kingdom. When Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in 1526, however, he destroyed the only formal system of poor relief, leaving the poor without support; many of them necessarily took to the roads, no doubt some of them alongside the monastics forced from their retreats. (The seizure and sale of monastic lands, moreover, displaced yet more people.) The institutions of government would struggle for the next century to find acceptable ways to care for the deserving poor, but it was decades

after the dissolution of the monasteries before the state's responsibility was even articulated; eventually something like an organized national taxation to support the poor was established, along with local institutional responses. The City of London regained control of its hospitals in 1553, when the Royal Hospitals were chartered, among which was Bridewell. This former palace of Henry VIII was sought as a place to treat poor beggars: as one petition argued, "there could be no means to amend this miserable sort [of beggars], but by making some general provision of work, wherewith the *willing* poor may be exercised; and whereby the froward, strong, and sturdy vagabond may be compelled to live profitably to the commonwealth" (Tawney and Power 1924, 2: 307). Intended to be a "house of labour and occupations" (2: 311) – a house of "correction," as it later became known – Bridewell was, in theory, a real innovation in the early modern conception of the poor; the existence of the house presupposed that the poor were not simply sinful, but needed work. As such, Bridewell was, according to one economic historian, "the greatest innovation and the most characteristic institution of the new system" of poor relief (Leonard [1900] 1965, 39). A statute of 1572 ordered the provision of work on a national scale, including the establishment of houses of correction in every county, "to the intent every such poor and needy person old or young able to do any work standing in necessity of relief shall not for want of work go abroad either begging or committing pilferings or other misdemeanor living in idleness" (Tawney and Power 1924, 2: 332). These noble-minded efforts, unfortunately, were either ineffectual or undermined by corruption. Bridewell itself fairly quickly became a notorious prison, where vagrants and prostitutes in particular were taken to be whipped and incarcerated, and where the torture of political prisoners occasionally took place.³

Representation

When early modern writers wrote of the poor, they invariably divided them into two types: the "deserving" poor – the truly sick or aged – and "sturdy beggars" – vagrants who merely pretended to be deformed or ill. The national schemes of relief were intended for the deserving poor, while the whip and the cart were reserved for the others. Official discourse was particularly harsh in its accounts of, and punishments for, idle vagrants. Idleness was reviled as a sin – the belief being that many chose to be without work, when in fact there was no work to be found. The Elizabethan "Homily against Idleness" forcefully stated the official view: "It is the appointment and will of God, that every man, during the time of this mortal and transitory life, should give himself to such honest and godly exercise and labor, and every one follow his own business, and to walk uprightly in his own calling. Man (saith Job) is born to labor" (Rickey and Stroup 1968, 2: 249, 251). Idleness was not only a moral and religious failing, but a political one as well, since idleness led not to inactivity, but to the wrong kind of activity, possibly even to rebellion, as Richard Morison argued in his *A Remedy for Sedition* (1536, sig. D2v): "The lack of honest crafts, and the abundance of idleness, albeit they be not the whole cause of sedition, yet as they breed thieves, murderers, and beggars, so not a little they provoke men, or things like men, to rebellion."

The problem with vagrants, as official texts argued, was not only that they were idle, but that they were loose, unattached to any system of hierarchy. Since vagrants had no jobs, they were not part of an elaborate system which attempted to regulate wages, apprenticeships,

clothing, food, goods, and so on. Moreover, because vagrants continually crossed over geographic boundaries, they could not be fixed within any civic structure. Vagrants also transgressed social boundaries: they were reputed to be masters of disguise who could counterfeit equally well either abject conditions and even physical infirmities, or a high condition as a well-dressed gentleman. Perhaps the most famous early modern image of a vagrant was Figure 9.1, from Thomas Harman's rogue pamphlet, *A Caveat or Warening for Common Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vagabones*.⁴ The image shows the same notorious rogue as two people, in split screen: on the left is "A upright man, Nicolas Blunt," a prosperous-looking man with a well-trimmed beard and a sturdy walking stick; on the right is "The counterfeit Cranke [a type of rogue] Nicolas Genynges," who is dressed in rags, mud and blood visible on his face, standing in a position of mock servility, holding a rough hat (in contrast to Blunt's more stylish one) to "receive the charity and devotion of the people" (Harman 1573, sig. D2v). The two figures merge in the middle, where the walking stick of "Blunt" seems to



Figure 9.1 Thomas Harman, *A caveat or warening for common cursetors* (1567/8), sig. D2v. Folger Shakespeare Library Shelfmark: STC 12787. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

pass through the hand, but behind the hat, of “Genynges.” Beneath the picture is the following verse (modernized here):

These two pictures lively set out,
 One body and soul, God send him more grace.
 This monstrous dissembler, a Cranke all about.
 Uncomely coveting of each to embrace,
 Money or wares, as he made his race.
 And sometime a mariner, and a serving man,
 Or else an artificer, as he would feign then.
 Such shifts he used, being well tried,
 Abandoning labor, till he was espied.
 Condign punishment for his dissimulation,
 He surely received with much exclamation.

(Harman 1573, sig. D2)

Harman tells Genynges’ story at length, with increasing details in later editions, showing how Genynges has counterfeited every detail of his poverty and marginality, only to go home at night to “a pretty house well stuffed, with a fair joint table, and a fair cupboard garnished with pewter, having an old ancient woman to his wife” (Harman 1573, sig. E1). For Harman and his readers, Genynges’ “dissimulation” is both deplorable and fascinating.

A vagrant, one writer said in 1631, is “a wandering planet” (Saltonstall [1631] 1946, 39), and just as a wandering planet contradicted and subverted what was thought to be a universally accepted conception of the universe, so the vagrant contradicted and subverted an idealized conception of the social world. Early modern texts repeatedly register, in various ways, anxieties resulting from real and imagined social mobility. To rise up the social scale was both desired and deplored. If a cunning vagrant such as Genynges could “pass” as a gentleman or at least one of the middling sort, the entire hierarchy of status might begin to seem arbitrary.⁵

Above all, vagrants were associated with crime. Literary and political representations of vagrants frequently described an elaborate criminal underworld over which vagrants supposedly ruled: thus the so-called “rogue pamphlets” of John Awdeley, Thomas Harman, Thomas Dekker, Samuel Rid, and Robert Greene, among others, ascribed to vagrant beggars a rigidly structured organization, featuring a hierarchical list of rogue types, in which both male and female beggars were classified by skill, experience, and power. It was claimed that they held secret meetings at which they carefully planned their villainy, and elected a “king” or “captain” over themselves. They were also said to have their own language, known as “beggars’ cant” or “Peddler’s French”; this secret language of thieves required glossing dictionaries, helpfully provided by Harman and the others, complete with sample dialogues and translations. The rogue pamphlets, though highly repetitive – with much plagiarism occurring from one to the other – were frequently reprinted, well into the seventeenth century: Richard Head’s *The English Rogue* (1688) and *The Canting Academy* (1673), as well as *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew* (1699, by the unknown B. E.) owe much to Harman and Awdeley, even as they owe much to earlier Continental works such as the *Liber Vagatorum* (c.1509). As a subgenre of popular culture, the rogue pamphlets overlap with sixteenth-century jest books and anticipate the beginnings of the picaresque novel. The rogue and conny-catching pamphlets were a forerunner of today’s tabloid journalism, offering their readers some version of social reality though also

inventing much of it. In these accounts, the vagrant was wily and protean, not hungry or homeless but running a con on the gullible.

Among the most reviled and feared of vagrant types were “gypsies.” The word itself was (incorrectly) said to be derived from “Egyptians,” as gypsies supposedly came originally from Egypt. Various parliamentary statutes attempted to contain – physically as well as discursively – the gypsy threat, ordering their expulsion from the kingdom along with harsh punishments, yet also attempted to distinguish between gypsies native to England, and those recently arrived (usually through Scotland or Ireland) – in short, to provide for some form of assimilation. Gypsies, too, were said to have a special “canting” language, and while it overlapped with the beggar’s cant found in Harman’s and Awdeley’s pamphlets, it had unique characteristics and a different vocabulary that made it seem impenetrable to outsiders, and hence threatening. Lists of gypsy cant were compiled, though not on the scale of beggar’s cant. More of a rural than an urban phenomenon, gypsies were known – as in modern stereotypes – for their colorful dress and their wandering in relatively large groups, but also for what seemed their racial or ethnic difference (although such terms were not generally used to describe them); “counterfeit” gypsies were said to apply blackface, while real gypsies were described by some as “Artificial Negroes” and “counterfeit Moors” (Browne 1650, 286). Still, in Ben Jonson’s Court masque *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621), the ranking aristocrats of the realm dressed in gypsy costumes and feigned their identities.

Like other types of criminals in the early modern period, vagrants were also linked to additional categories of deviance and transgression, especially sexuality. Male vagrant types, such as the Upright Man, were believed to command virtual harems of women vagrants, known as “Morts” and “Doxies,” while female vagrants were said to be sexually unrestrained, disorderly, and a clear social threat – in short, treated as if they were all prostitutes. Harman described their sexual intercourse – in a phrase that reduced such figures to the level of sheer bestiality – as if they “were dog and bitch” (1567/8, sig. B3v). Pamphlet writers of the period promoted lurid stories of orgies in rural barns and aggressive assaults on the innocent (told, to be sure, through voyeuristic narratives). “No sin but is here committed without shame,” Thomas Dekker wrote: “Adultery is common amongst them. Incest but laughed at, Sodomy made a jest” ([1885] 1963, 3: 111). Among the many other social crimes of which they were accused, then, vagrants perverted (and therefore undermined) the period’s normalized concepts of marriage and family.

It is thus easy to see why early modern writers, across a wide political and religious spectrum, demonized the vagrant while attempting to care for the deserving poor: the vagrant was identified with gypsies, Jews, Jesuits, prostitutes, petty thieves, atheists, sodomites, traitors, and other “deviant” categories. Yet the social reality of vagrants, as we know it from archival sources today, was greatly different from the picture of organization recounted above. The representations of the rogue pamphlets and other forms of popular culture produced an inverted image of the very social structure which the vagrants were said to threaten: carefully delineated degrees of social distinction; a crude apprenticeship system; an “in-group” specialized language; a king or captain to rule. Possessing sovereignty, order, status distinction, and regulation of employment, the vagrants resemble nothing so much as one of the craft guilds of early modern London. We might well ask, why would the dominant culture project a grid of order upon these pathetic figures?

Perhaps one answer to this question is that, like any representation, this one is doing ideological work of some kind; in this vision, vagrants become the pathetic doubles of the

dominant culture. Their difference from the ordinary citizenry permits (and requires) their demonization – in terms of race and ethnicity, sexuality, sedition, and so on – but their resemblance ironically undermines such distinctions. Hence the particular zeal with which beggars who counterfeit “normal” citizens were hunted down and exposed. The dominant culture can only “see” the vagrant primarily through its own categories, but there was a further extension of this mode of representation which is more difficult to explain – the tradition of the “merry beggar.” Contemporaneous with laments such as Stubbes’s, pamphlets such as Harman’s, and the steady accretion of official statutory punishments is a discourse that thoroughly romanticized and idealized the beggar’s life, turning every negative into a positive. This tradition dated from the early fifteenth century at least, but seemed to reach an apotheosis in the seventeenth century. In this vision, vagrants were said to be actually superior to members of normal society: their food fell into their hands; living in a natural state, they slept better under the stars than under a blanket; they enjoyed an unfettered sexuality; they were their own masters; they were free; and so on. In John Taylor’s *The Praise, Antiquity, and commodity, of Beggery, Beggars, and Begging*, even the lice crawling on the beggar’s body are said to be “Nature’s gifts” (1621, sig. C3v). For Taylor, the beggar almost escapes the consequences of the Fall: though “A curse was laid on all the race of man” with Adam’s fall, so that “of his labors he should live and eat, / And get his bread by travail and sweat,” yet, Taylor wrote, “if that any from this curse be free, / A begger must he be, and none but he” (sig. D3). This pastoral freedom would surely have been news to the vagrants dying in the streets of London. Theater audiences in London, in fact, enjoyed seeing such romanticized figures on the stage, as in Richard Brome’s play *A Jovial Crew* (it may have been the very last play performed before the closing of the theaters in 1642). Brome appropriated the types and language of the rogue pamphlets to produce a band of merry beggars singing their way through the countryside, happy to accept their status.

Other texts of the period radically contradict these literary and subliterate representations of the vagrant as organized criminal or merry pastoral figure. It may be that the wrenching economic and social displacements of so many people, and their fall into poverty and vagrancy, required a compensatory vision of them as not actually suffering, as even being better off than others. The relation between citizen and vagrant is thus one, in part, of reflection and inversion: their thieving is a threat to, but also a symbol of, the economic practices which have produced their vagrancy in the first place, and their alleged superiority permits the dominant culture to continue content in its own status. Demonization and idealization here seem to be opposite forms of the same cultural process at work. The First Citizen in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* – though he is hardly the “voice” of the play – offers a radical critique of the necessary correlation between wealth and poverty:

What authority surfeits on would relieve us. If they would yield us but the superfluity while it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely. But they think we are too dear. The leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize their abundance; our sufferance is a gain to them. (1.1.14–20)

Such dissonant voices were occasionally heard on the stage or even in the street, but they were rare, and usually silenced.

A related representational mode of the vagrant beggar, which was widespread in a variety of written and visual texts, paired the beggar with the image of the king – the beggar’s social,

economic, moral, political, and ontological opposite. The King–Beggar opposition figures prominently, for example, in Richard II's bitter prison soliloquy:

Sometimes am I king;
 Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
 And so I am. Then crushing penury
 Persuades me I was better when a king;
 Then am I kinged again, and by and by
 Think that I am unkinged by Bolingbroke,
 And straight am nothing.

(5.5.32–8)

If to be a king is everything, then to be a beggar is, logically, “nothing,” as Richard indicates. This type of oppositional dynamic has been termed “symbolic inversion” (Babcock 1978, 14). In one sense, such inversions are an attempt to create or reinforce difference between categories; in a key speech, however, Hamlet reminds us that such oppositions also constitute equations between the terms. Here he refuses to tell Claudius where Polonius' body is hidden:

Hamlet. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service – two dishes, but to one table. That's the end.

King. Alas, alas!

Hamlet. A man may fish with the worm that eat of a king, and eat of the fish that fed of that worm.

The meaning of his cryptic remarks, Hamlet says, is “Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar” (4.3.19–32). Again, an attempt to distinguish leads to a collapse of difference: the vagrant beggar is intimately, inextricably linked to the various forms of power (such as the royal “progress”) in the dominant culture.

By far the most complex theatrical representation of a vagrant beggar in this period is that of Poor Tom, the disguise assumed by Edgar in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (c.1605). Poor Tom was supposedly an Abraham man (one of the standard rogue types described by Harman and others) from Bedlam, hence a (usually counterfeit) madman beggar. Poor Tom's confrontation with King Lear reflects both Lear's humiliation as well as the arbitrariness of social distinction. Vagrancy is ultimately a culturally constructed mode of deviance, and as social attitudes toward such deviants vary, so do its representations: pathetic victim, criminal, potential rebel, con man, trickster, counterfeiter, madman, “nothing” – such was the vagrant.

Theater

Simply to be a vagrant constituted a crime against the state, as we have seen, but the early modern definition of a vagrant was considerably broader than in a contemporary sense. The 1597 statute (39 Eliz. I, c. 4), for example, defined vagrants as including “all jugglers [i.e., magicians], tinkers, peddlers, and petty chapmen wandering abroad” (Tawney and Power 1924, 2: 355); some of these occupations were clearly “jobs,” as we understand the term today, like traveling salesmen, but such vocations were forbidden because, in “wandering,” they could not be fixed in

the social field. Among those vocations officially defined as vagrant was also, somewhat surprisingly, that of the actor, though with an important exception, as the same 1597 statute explained:

All fencers, bearwards [i.e., bear trainers for the bear-baiting pits], common players of interludes and minstrels wandering abroad (other than players of interlude belonging to any Baron of this realm, or any other honorable personage of greater degree, to be authorized to play under the hand and seal of arms of such Baron or personage). (Tawney and Power 1924, 2: 355)

Such statutes explain why companies of actors such as Shakespeare's were known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men until 1603, and thereafter as the King's Men: they had to be licensed as "belonging to" an "honorable personage" of a "greater degree." No matter how wealthy and independent they were, Shakespeare's company required the legal umbrella (or fiction) that they were the "servants" of the Lord Chamberlain – in effect, his employees – or they would be subject to the vagrancy statutes. Although we might expect that the profession of actor was not held in high repute, the statutes went so far as to make it potentially criminal.

Early modern opponents of the theater argued that the public theaters of London were sites of disorder and infection continually linked to vagrants: "a play," Henry Crosse wrote in 1603, "is like a sink in a town, whereunto all the filth doth run; or a bile in the body, that draweth all the ill humors unto it" (Gurr 1987, 217). The Lord Mayor wrote in 1595 that the public theaters provided a place for "the refuse sort of evil-disposed and ungodly people about this city.... to assemble together ... [the theaters are] the ordinary places for all masterless men and vagabond persons that haunt the highways to meet together and recreate themselves" (*Collections*, 1907, 77). While the Lord Mayors and other city authorities continually tried to suppress the theaters, the national authorities, in the form of the Privy Council, licensed and protected (to some extent) the theaters on the grounds that the Queen was "pleased at sometimes to take delight and recreation in the sight and hearing of them"; thus, the "exercise of such plays not being evil in itself may with a good order and moderation be suffered in a well-governed estate" (*Collections*, 1907, 82, 81).⁶

In attacking the theaters, writers invariably invoked metaphors of disease and infection. Some city authorities, in good conscience, opposed the public theaters on the grounds that they drew together large numbers of "the basest sort of people," as the Lord Mayor wrote in 1583, "many infected with sores running on them"; these people brought upon the entire city "the peril of infection" from the plague (*Collections*, 1907, 63, 62). The danger cited here was real and potentially fatal. The causes of plague were not yet known in the early modern period, but its spread had been observed to accelerate among throngs of people. As a result, the theaters were temporarily closed whenever the plague count – the number of people who died from plague per week – reached a certain level; such closings happened with some frequency.⁷ One preacher in 1577 made the equation clear (if illogical): "The cause of plagues is sin, if you look to it well: and the cause of sin are plays: therefore the cause of plagues are plays" (White 1577, 47).

Perhaps the most serious "infections" in the period were figurative ones, of the political body. Since playhouses were considered to be like sinkholes where masterless men and "vagabond persons" met, they represented a place where the political disease of sedition might spread as easily as the plague. The memory of previous insurrections never seemed to fade away, moreover, particularly the riots on May Day, 1517: the Lord Mayor wrote against the Theatre (James Burbage's first theatrical venture) in 1583 because of "the danger of disorders at such assemblies, the memory of Ill [i.e., evil] May Day begun upon a less occasion of like sort" (*Collections*, 1907, 62–3); the Recorder of London, William Fleetwood, said of one city "insurrection" of apprentices in 1586 that he had found "all things as like unto Ill May Day, as could be devised in all manner

of circumstances ... they wanted nothing but execution" (Long 1989, 51). A few years later, a collaborative play, *Sir Thomas More*, sought to represent that same May Day riot on the stage, a prospect that led the Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney, to censor it: "Leave out ... the insurrection wholly with the cause thereof" (Gabrieli and Melchiori 1990, 17). Shakespeare was apparently one of the several playwrights who worked on this play.

Although some city authorities exaggerated such threats, again perhaps as a way of controlling the theaters, still the period 1581–1602 in London has been described by one historian as "an epidemic of disorder" (Manning 1988, 187), stemming from the tensions associated with social change and economic decline. The problems peaked around 1590–5, just as Shakespeare was establishing himself as a playwright. One notorious incident in Southwark (the location, on the south bank of the Thames, of several theaters) in June 1592 began, the Lord Mayor reported, when "great multitudes of people assembled together and the principal actors [of the riot – even the metaphors implicate the theaters] to be certain apprentices of the feltmakers gathered together ... with a great number of loose and masterless men apt for such purposes." Problems began when authorities attempted to serve a warrant upon a feltmonger's servant who was committed to the Marshalsea prison without cause. The crowd moved to block the authorities, for "restraining of whom the said apprentices and masterless men assembled themselves by occasion and pretence of their meeting at a play which besides the breach of the sabbath day giveth opportunity of committing these and such like disorders" (*Collections*, 1907, 71). The theater – already transgressive in performing a play on Sunday, when they were forbidden – thus served as a nightmare meeting place of unstable urban youth and unruly swarms of vagrants, in an attack on civil order.

The truth of what happened that day is, of course, more ambiguous than the above account indicates,⁸ but the incident was read and interpreted by civic authorities as another link in the chain of vagrancy, sedition, and theater. Essential to that interpretation is the recurring terror of the unruly mob of vagrants. In several plays of the 1590s – depicting the rebellion of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw against Richard II (the anonymous plays *Woodstock* and *The Life and Death of Jack Straw*), the Ill May Day rising of 1517 (the multiply-authored *Sir Thomas More*), and Jack Cade's rebellion against Henry VI (Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part Two*) – the central rebellion is furthered by, though not caused by, an association with urban vagrants. The London theaters, themselves the subject of attack by civic authorities, thus staged representations of the very riots most often invoked against them, but the plays did not implicate the theaters as disorderly sites.

The vagrants of London may have congregated around the theaters, which were, after all, located in the poorest, most marginal parts of the urban area, but the consistent association of them with political disorder seems, in retrospect, grossly exaggerated; most rebellions in the period were led or inspired by disgruntled aristocrats. Still, the enduring political myth is that these masterless men represented the peril of infection, real and figurative. Represented as marginal, disorderly, and deviant, London theaters and London vagrants were closely linked throughout the period. "Vagrant," "rogue," "vagabond," "masterless man": whatever the name, whether genuine or "counterfeit," this figure inspired both fear and fascination in early modern England.

Future Developments

Much of the previous scholarship on vagrancy in the early modern period has followed one of the two lines indicated by the first two categorical divisions in this essay: "historical contexts" or "representation" – that is, very broadly speaking, the approaches of historians (reading the vagrant as a

historical figure embedded in social and economic conditions), or those of literary critics (who read the vagrant, as depicted in the rogue pamphlets, as an imagined response to cultural phenomena). Perhaps the central question that the two approaches confront is the extent to which the rogue pamphlets constitute “evidence” of a factual nature, or of an ideological construct. Some recent scholars have gone so far as to argue that the rogue books derive entirely from the jestbook tradition (Woodbridge 2001) and cannot, and should not, be read as reflecting any social reality. There can be no doubt that early modern writers – from hack authors of popular pamphlets to the authors of Parliamentary statutes – believed that there had been a dramatic increase in the number of vagrants in the sixteenth century; various forms of archival documents, from the Bridewell entries in London to the Norwich census of 1570, provide substantial support for this perception. Yet to what extent (if any) can we believe, for example, Thomas Harman’s account of Nicholas Blunt?

More recent scholarship has attempted to “blur the boundaries between the historical and the literary, objective and subjective understandings, public paranoia and private experience” (Dionne and Mentz 2004, 22), as the editors of a recent collection note of the essays they have brought together. Just as literary movements like New Historicism have moved beyond earlier binaries such as subversion/containment, so too has the study of rogues and vagrants moved beyond the fact/fiction divide to employ richer, more nuanced models of analysis such as negotiation and hybridity. Renewed attention to some relatively neglected topics, such as the phenomenon of gypsies, will surely lead to additional insights into the early modern period, while presentist concerns will continue to link issues of sixteenth-century vagrancy with our own social and economic conditions.

NOTES

- I wish to acknowledge the wisdom and support of my colleagues in the Folger Library Faculty Weekend Seminar “Rogues, Gypsies, and Outsiders: Early Modern People on the Margins” (May 2014), ably directed by David Cressy.
- 1 In the epigraphs and elsewhere, I have silently modernized *i/j*, *y*, *s*, *u/v*, and contractions, except for early modern titles.
 - 2 Throughout this essay, the terms “beggar,” “rogue,” “vagrant,” “vagabond,” and “masterless man” are used interchangeably, as they generally were in texts in the period. The exception is the term “poor”: not all poor were considered vagrants, and not all vagrants were thought to be truly poor, as will be explained.
 - 3 On the history of Bridewell, see Innes (1987), Carroll (1996), and Twynning (1998).
 - 4 This is the title of Q3 (1567/8) and Q4 (1573). Harman’s book was first published in 1566, followed by two editions in 1567/8. Each of the four editions adds detail to the Genynges narrative. See Carroll (1996, 70n). For discussions of Harman, see Beier (1985; 2004), Carroll (1996), Woodbridge (2001), and Fumerton 2004. The final word of the verse reads “declination” in the 1567/8 edition.
 - 5 The many early modern handbooks prescribing the appropriate dress and manners of a gentleman – such as Henry Peacham’s *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622) – ironically provided a guide to those who wanted to counterfeit gentlemanly behavior; they mirror the rogue pamphlets in many ways.
 - 6 The city authorities in London lacked legal jurisdiction over the large public playhouses, most of which were located just beyond the city limits in the so-called “liberties” of London.
 - 7 See Barroll (1991) on plague and the closing of the theaters. Some modern observers have speculated that city authorities at times used the plague merely as a pretext to close the theaters.
 - 8 On this particular event, see the different interpretations by Johnson (1969), Manning (1988), Patterson (1989), Wilson (1993), and Carroll (1996).

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10

Domestic Life

Martin Ingram

Allusions to household and family were ubiquitous in Renaissance plays, yet domestic life was rarely portrayed directly save in the specialized genre of domestic tragedy. Off the stage, their social significance is attested by the burgeoning genre of books of advice on marriage, family and household government, an increasing vogue for family histories, and more graphically in the family portraits that depict parents, children, and sometimes other relatives in stiff formation. These portraits, replete with emblems, are themselves not easy to interpret. Holbein's crowded sketch of the family of Sir Thomas More, including his father and daughter-in-law, contrasts with Johnson's apparently more private vision, set against the background of a formal garden, of Lord Capel and his wife and children around 1640 (Figure 10.1 and Figure 10.2). Expectations and experiences of domestic relations were certainly changing to some extent, along with the cultural context. But it should not be inferred from these two images that the period witnessed, as used to be supposed, a clear-cut change from "extended" to "nuclear" families. These are simply two visual representations of a social institution that was underlain by some enduring features but could take a multiplicity of forms and was subject to a host of accidents. In real life, household and family were both the basis of social order and personal security and the site of tension, conflict, and contest that were, in heightened form, the essence of drama. This chapter seeks to encapsulate what historians have discovered about family life in the research of the last fifty years, concluding with some remarks on the changing focus of the historiography and the use of sources.

The Significance of "Family" in Early Modern England

A vivid snapshot of the variety of family and household forms to be found in this period is provided by a unique "census" surviving for what was then the village of Ealing (Middlesex) in 1599. This listed the inhabitants of eighty-five households, which – excluding a school with



Figure 10.1 Hans Holbein the Younger, *Sir Thomas More and His Family* (1527). By permission of the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kupferstichkabinett.



Figure 10.2 Cornelius Johnson, *The Capel Family* (c. 1640). © National Portrait Gallery, London.

eighteen boarders – ranged in size from twenty-one individuals to just one person (Allison 1963). It is clear that there, as elsewhere in England, the core of the family was recognized to be a husband, wife, and children. But it could be fractured or eroded to something less, especially among the poor, where abandoned wives and solitary widows, with or without children, were all too common. On the other hand, bereaved spouses (especially men) often wed again: perhaps a fifth of brides and grooms were marrying for the second or subsequent time. From the middling ranks upward, the family was often extended by the presence of servants or apprentices. Indeed, to contemporaries the word “family” primarily meant a household of this kind, rather than simply a group of people linked by ties of blood and marriage (Tadmor 1996). In the highest social strata, servants were numerous and themselves differentiated by rank and function – from lowly maid-servants and servingmen, to butlers, stewards or secretaries, to the gentlemen and gentlewomen who “waited” on the great. Occasionally other relations by blood or marriage resided in the “family”: grandfathers or grandmothers, sisters, brothers, or cousins. Sometimes, especially among the gentry and aristocracy, a newly married couple would reside for a while beneath the parental roof. But mostly couples were expected to establish new households for themselves, and this made marriage a social transition of the utmost significance.

The importance of the family household did not lie simply in procreation, child-rearing, and the transmission of property across the generations, vital though these were in a society in which birth and dynasty were of overriding importance. The role of the household extended well beyond what we think of as private concerns. In Tudor and Stuart political theory, the rule of the paterfamilias over his wife, children, and servants was analogous to that of the prince over his subjects. Contemporary ideas in this respect were shaped in part by Aristotle and Xenophon, but were at the same time firmly rooted in practical experience of the public role of the “family.” The households of princes and aristocratic families were of obvious political significance. Lower down the social scale, the families of yeomen, husbandmen, craftsmen, and traders – those who might not be taxpayers to the Crown, but certainly paid their rates for the upkeep of the church and relief of the poor, and took their turn to fill local offices such as constable and churchwarden – were likewise self-evidently constituents of the commonwealth (Amussen 1988).

Family households were also the main focus of economic activity – the country houses of the nobility and gentry were the center of their great estates; a merchant’s residence was the site of commercial or financial dealings; in towns, craftsmen lived over or behind their shops as well as producing and selling goods from them; in the countryside, the houses of yeomen and husbandmen, with their adjacent outbuildings, were the hub of farming activities, while spinning and weaving were carried on literally as cottage industries. Contemporary churchmen saw the family as the nursery of religion (and religion itself as an element of good citizenship), laying on householders the duty of ensuring that their children, servants, and apprentices absorbed the elements of Christian doctrine from the catechism. Certainly households fostered “education” in the broad sense that contemporaries used that word, embracing not only the elements of book-learning but also social skills and instruction in a craft, husbandry, or housewifery. Service and apprenticeship were the prime form of training, the means whereby young people could acquire not only some of the wherewithal to establish their own household in due course, but also essential skills to equip them for what was undoubtedly a position of some responsibility, with its attendant perils. Masters and mistresses, for their part, had the right to “correct” their charges, if necessary by physical force. For this and other reasons, servants and apprentices might find their position irksome. The resulting tensions within the household are a recurrent theme of Renaissance drama, as indeed are other manifestations of the energy of youth (Ben-Amos 1994; Griffiths 1996; Burnett 1997).

Household and Community

Much of what members of the household did was open, or at least susceptible, to public scrutiny. In every parish in town and country, churchwardens and their assistants or sidesmen had a duty to make presentments to the church courts: that is, to report their neighbors – a step that condemned them to a summons to court and hence admonition, the shame of public penance, or (for the recalcitrant) excommunication – for faults such as failing to attend church, lapses of personal morality such as being pregnant at marriage, fathering a bastard or committing adultery, or even for conniving at the sins of others by “harboring” pregnant women or allowing a couple to fornicate under the householder’s roof (Ingram 1987). Constables and other local officers had similar duties of surveillance in the secular sphere, which in many larger towns extended to certain sexual offences, especially when there was suspicion of prostitution. As many plays of the period attest, this was preeminently true in London and Westminster. Adverse reports to the city authorities could result in the offenders being “carted” as “whores,” “whoremongers,” or “bawds” – that is, paraded around the town in an open wagon with basins ringing before them to attract the crowds. Alternatively, they might be arrested and brought into Bridewell – a workhouse and penitentiary set up in 1553 – to be set to work and, as like as not, whipped if they were found “faulty.” Churchwardens and constables were often aided by inquisitive and censorious neighbors who sometimes spied on illicit goings-on through windows or through conveniently located holes in doors and walls, and who might cooperate to “stake out” a dwelling or break open the doors to secure proof positive of scandalous activity (Griffiths 2008). The obverse of these activities was that respectability – expressed as “good credit,” “honesty,” or “civil carriage” in the middling and lower social ranks, the analogue of upper-class notions of “honor” – was a prime source of social capital (Gowing 1996). Not least, the economic credit of a household was affected by the reputation of its members (Shepard 2003).

Houses: Space, Fabric, and Furnishings

Even within the confines of the household, privacy was in short supply. Entries, shops and halls were an interface with the wider world, easily accessible. Admission to the more remote spaces was restricted, and some (such as closets and counting houses) were expected to be closed off. Yet for unmarried couples to retire behind closed, and especially locked, doors was generally taken as a sign that they were up to no good. Moreover, for practical reasons privacy or seclusion was often impossible. Servants frequently lived cheek by jowl with their masters and mistresses, and certainly with each other, while walls, floors, and other internal partitions were often flimsy or defective. Bed curtains were becoming more common in this period, but window curtains were still rare even in the houses of the very rich. In some ways, these conditions helped to maintain household order, since they made it more difficult to indulge in secret vice. On the other hand, promiscuous living conditions could make maidservants very vulnerable to the sexual attentions of masters or, more commonly, fellow-servants. The sexual abuse of children also occurred, though probably only rarely: the perpetrators appear to have been masters, servants in the same household, or casual visitors more often than fathers, stepfathers, or other relatives. Incest, despite its prominence in the drama, was apparently rare (Ingram 2001).

Of course houses varied greatly in size and layout, largely reflecting the wealth and occupation of the owner or tenant but depending also on their location in town or country (Jones 1996; Cooper 1999). A common pattern, capable of infinite adaptation and elaboration, was that of hall and entry together with a number of chambers (used for other purposes as well as sleeping) and parlors, buttery, kitchen, and other service quarters, a shop or outhouses for agricultural, industrial, or domestic use, and perhaps a “house of office” (latrine) in the “backside” or garden. Wealthy households might afford a gallery or other prestigious embellishments. These spaces were furnished with bedsteads, tables and forms, joint stools and the occasional chair; they were equipped with firedogs and irons, hooks, pots and pans, and various other utensils of brass and iron for cooking, baking and brewing; and were garnished with wood-, pewter- and silverware, napery, bedding, painted cloths or tapestries for the walls, perhaps some books, and occasionally soft furnishings such as cushions and carpets. The poor would possess only a few of the most basic items, the “better sort” correspondingly more. The very rich could aspire to some comfort, but even their houses would have seemed to the modern eye sparsely furnished. The luxurious visions of Sir Epicure Mammon in *The Alchemist* were pure fantasy. More realistic is the gentry household evoked in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. The audience infers the presence of kitchen and other offices from the servants featured in the play, and hears directly of gate, yard, hall, parlor, study, withdrawing chamber, and private chamber. They see the butler and other servingmen “with a voider and a wooden knife” clear away salt and bread, tablecloth and napkins, after supper is ended; then stools are brought in and a carpet, candles, and candlesticks laid on a table for a game of cards (Orlin 1994, 145–6; see Figure 10.3 and Figure 10.4).



Figure 10.3 Male and female roles: hunting and spinning. From Chappell and Ebsworth (1869–99), 2: 411.

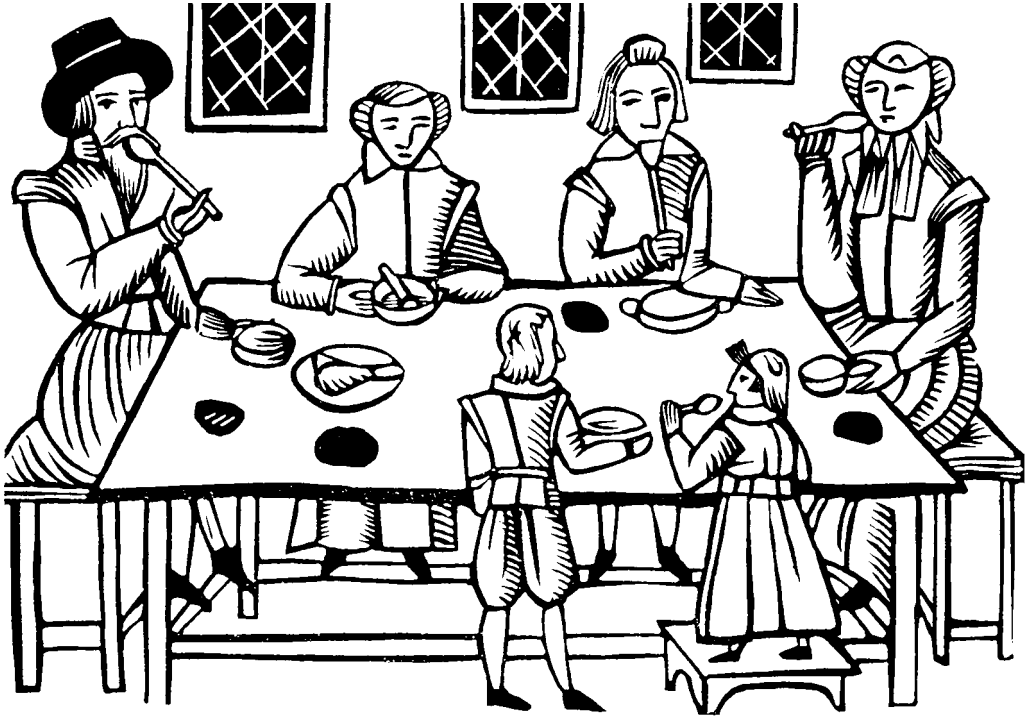


Figure 10.4 A family meal. From Chappell and Ebsworth (1869–99), 1: 86. Source: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>. Used under CC-BY-SA 4.0 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

Marriage Ages, Spousals, and Weddings

It might be thought that, in a dynastic and authoritarian society in which marriage and household were so important, matrimony would be restricted to those of the age of discretion and marriage laws would be carefully framed to regulate unions and, at least for the upper ranks, ensure family control over entry into the married state. The reality was less clear-cut. Despite attempts to change the law in the sixteenth century, the age at which a valid marriage could be contracted remained twelve for a girl and fourteen for a male. Moreover, it was possible for girls and boys to be betrothed together from the age of seven. In principle they had the right, when they reached the age of twelve or fourteen respectively, to repudiate the union; but obviously this might be difficult at so tender an age. “Child marriages” of this sort were still a real possibility in sixteenth-century England, at least among the aristocracy and, especially in the northwest, in the lower ranks too. But the practice was declining. Teenage marriage, especially for girls, was still common among the nobility and gentry and other wealthy groups in Elizabeth’s reign, but marriage ages tended to drift upwards in the seventeenth century. Contemporary authorities were strongly opposed to “untimely and discommendable marriages” among the poor and those who still had their way to make in the world (Tawney and Power 1924, 1: 363). Thus for the bulk of the population, the age at which people commonly married was much later than the legal minimum – on average the mid to late twenties, the man being

commonly (but not invariably) somewhat older than the female when there was disparity. The average conceals great variation, however, and it was by no means uncommon for a woman to be married at twenty (Laslett 1983).

In Church law, the consent of parents, the presence of witnesses, and solemnization by a minister in church were not absolutely necessary to make a marriage. As the Duchess of Malfi herself puts it, "I have heard lawyers say, a contract in a chamber / *Per verba de praesenti* is absolute marriage" (1.1). She was right: it was possible throughout this period, indeed until Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, to contract a valid union by the mere verbal declaration of the couple in words of the present tense, characteristically taking the form of a simple ceremony called "spousals," "troth-plight," or "handfasting." This reflected the overriding importance that the Church, when the law of marriage was developed in the twelfth century, had placed on the free consent of the couple. On the other hand, the Church had campaigned for centuries to ensure that planned unions were adequately publicized, preferably by the calling of "banns" in church, or at least sanctioned by a license issued by the ecclesiastical authorities; and that marriages were solemnized in a religious ceremony. Churchmen also assumed that in normal circumstances young people should seek the consent of their parents or other kinsfolk before they wed. These principles were in fact reinforced in the reign of Elizabeth, partly at the insistence of Protestant divines who attached greater importance to parental consent. In the ecclesiastical canons of 1604, entry into marriage was hedged about by a dense thicket of regulations.

Yet confusions remained. Although marriage was made by consent, the precise form of words was vital. Contracts in words *de praesenti* – such as "I, John, take thee, Joan" – were immediately binding, but words *de futuro* – "I will marry thee" – were in the nature of contracts *to marry* that could in certain circumstances be broken and were superseded by any later *de praesenti* spousals or a church wedding. Moreover, while the law recognized unsolemnized or unwitnessed unions to be valid, they were regarded as irregular and the couple was liable to be punished, or at least harried by the Church authorities until they solemnized the marriage. Again, those who evaded publicity by securing what were called "clandestine" marriages – ceremonies conducted by a minister, perhaps in church or chapel, but secretly and at irregular times or seasons – were liable to be excommunicated, as were those who aided or abetted them or even attended the wedding. But such marriages were nonetheless binding (Outhwaite 1995).

Further uncertainties arose from the fact that spousals ceremonies, often conducted in a family setting in the presence of parents, friends, masters, and mistresses, and as like as not concluded with a feast or sealed with drink, could be a normal part of the marriage process: the secular conclusion of a union which would, some days, weeks or months later, be solemnized in church. Seen in this light, spousals were the culmination of courting rituals that, at their most elaborate, included go-betweens, a carefully choreographed exchange of gifts or "tokens," and negotiations over the lands and goods that would eventually be settled on the couple (O'Hara 2000). In popular parlance, spousals or handfasting made a couple "sure," "husband and wife before God." Apparently there was no consensus at any social level about whether a contract licensed sexual relations before the church ceremony. Many thought it did and acted accordingly; but other individuals explicitly said no. The issue is obscured by the fact that, irrespective of the existence or otherwise of a binding contract, courting couples often had sex: parish register analysis indicates that overall about a fifth of brides were pregnant at marriage, although it may be assumed that the chastity of upper-class women was more closely guarded. "May one be with child afore they are married?" asks the socially pretentious Gertrude in *Eastward Ho*. "A little thing does that," replies her mother (3.2).

Predictably, contemporary moralists forbade sex before marriage in church in any circumstances. However, many of them commended the practice of making a binding contract in advance of the church ceremony, as a way of ensuring adequate preparation. Although they envisaged sober ceremonies rather than the junketings that no doubt often took place in real life, they were in a sense endorsing folk custom. Ecclesiastical lawyers came to take a different view. Marriage contracts, especially those which were unwitnessed or imperfectly attested, were liable to dispute, and cases came for adjudication before the church courts. But verdicts in favor of contested contracts were always in a minority and by the early seventeenth century were extremely difficult to obtain. The judges, it would seem, viewed the evidence for unsolemnized unions with great skepticism and tended to favor marriage in church. Therefore, while in principle upholding the ancient law of spousals, in fact they gradually turned their backs on it (Ingram 1981). Popular practice gradually followed suit: in 1633 the writer of a treatise on marriage remarked that the custom of making contracts was “not now so much in use as it hath been formerly,” while in 1686 the editor of the primary legal authority on the subject admitted that “spousals are now in great measure worn out of use” (Griffith 1633, 272; Swinburne 1686, sig. A2v). Since these legal and social uncertainties were at their height in the decades of transition around 1600, it is no surprise that all the permutations of present and future spousals, clandestine ceremonies, contested unions, and jilted lovers were depicted in innumerable plays. Ironically, normal weddings – customarily followed by a celebratory dinner, dancing, horseplay in which the bride’s stockings and garters usually featured, and the ritual of escorting the couple to their bed – feature much less prominently, despite their obvious importance to real-life contemporaries (Cressy 1997, chs. 15–16).

Making Marriage: Lordship, Family, and Individual

For some sections of society the situation was complicated by wardship. When a landholder by knight service died leaving an heir or heiress under age, the Crown stepped in to administer the estate and arrange the minor’s marriage. These wardship rights, which could seriously threaten family interests and restrict the personal freedom of the individuals subject to them, were often sold to third parties. There was inevitably much scope for abuse, although by the early seventeenth century the rigors of the system were mitigated to the extent that the wardship was usually purchased by members of the family. The practice was abolished in 1646. Apart from the complications of wardship, disputed marriages, on stage and in real life, often turned on conflicts between families and individuals, and particularly between parents and children. Marriages arranged without consulting the wishes of the couple were not the norm in early modern England. Among the aristocracy and gentry and in other wealthy circles, parents or other close kin did play an extremely important, often preponderant, part in selecting marriage partners for their children. Even at this social level, however, male offspring did have some power of initiative; girls, especially if they were very young, usually had less room for maneuver (Heal and Holmes 1994, 60–8, 144–5). Further down the social scale things were even more flexible. Both prudence and obedience dictated that parents should be consulted, or at least their approval sought after the couple themselves had fixed on marriage; they might even have a powerful say. To this extent the constraints on marriage in the middle and even lower ranks of society should not be underestimated. Nonetheless there is much evidence that young people often enjoyed considerable freedom in finding a partner. In any case, late age at marriage and

high rates of mortality meant that one or both parents might well be dead before a young man or woman came to choose a mate (Wrightson 1982, ch. 3).

Individual and family interests were not necessarily at odds, of course; nor is it the case that young people were indifferent to matters of property and connection. On the contrary, material security and advancement provided powerful motives for seeking marriage, while at the most basic level those who lacked the wherewithal to set up house were liable to face strong opposition to their union from parish authorities. But emotion could complicate matters. Contemporary wisdom held that love was essential to a successful marriage, but consuming passion that overrode prudence or obligation to parents and friends was a disease akin to madness. One view was that, although it was essential that prospective partners had “good liking” or could undertake to “find in their heart to love” the other, it was better for love to develop after marriage had taken place. But feelings were not so easily controlled, and numerous sources attest to the power, at all social levels, of something very close to modern ideas of romantic love with all its heartaches and inconstancies. The astrological physician Richard Napier recorded in his casebooks many love-sick individuals: in 1615 a certain Jane Travell “sayeth that nobody can tell the sorrow that she endureth ... Sometimes will sigh three hours until as sad as can [be] ... Should have married one, and they were at words as if she would not have him. And then bidding him to marry elsewhere she fell into this passion.” On occasion, love led individuals to defy parents or cast prudence to the wind. Gervase Holles recounted how his father was in hopes that his son’s marriage would “bring him in a sum of money” sufficient to free him from financial embarrassment; but “This I had not years enough either to understand or to consider; and had not only placed an unalterable love upon my first wife ... but had secretly, without the least suspicion of my father and grandfather ... passed a contract with her.” The romantic passions that animate much contemporary drama are therefore not fantasies remote from everyday behavior but closely related to real life (MacDonald 1981, 89; Holles 1937, 203).

Separation and Divorce

While it was perilously easy to contract a marriage, the opportunities to escape the marital bond were few and narrow. Divorce in the modern sense, the dissolution of a valid union giving the right to remarry, was not recognized. Annulment was possible on certain grounds, principally prior contract and marriage within the forbidden degrees. Sometimes these rules were cynically exploited to break a perfectly valid marriage or for purposes of extortion – as in *The Roaring Girl* (scene 6) – but real-life cases were few. The church courts could grant a “separation from bed and board” on the grounds of cruelty (usually the recourse of female plaintiffs) or infidelity (mostly alleged by husbands). But since these were scandalous matters and there was no right of remarriage, the remedy was not popular and cases were infrequent, especially after about 1600.

The issue was a contentious one in Elizabethan England. Calvin and other Continental reformers allowed remarriage after divorce for adultery, and some English divines pressed strongly for a change in the law. During this period of debate some individuals of whatever social rank secured remarriages in defiance of the law. In 1605 the supposed wife of Barnaby Rich, a soldier later to turn moralist, admitted that she had “heard say that he had another wife but was divorced from her ... for [her] adultery ... who had a child by another man in his absence at sea” (Capp 2000). Some may even have thought that marriage was permissible in such circumstances. The ecclesiastical canons of 1604 were a sharp reaction to such cases and do seem to have clarified

the situation by reinforcing the ban on remarriage. In the same year an Act of Parliament – the “halter for your windpipe” cited in *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (5.1) – made bigamy a capital offense. Another strand in the same controversy was the demand for the death penalty for those guilty of adultery – a sharp form of divorce that solved the problem of remarriage for the innocent party. In the event, the Adultery Act was not to reach the statute book until 1650, and even then its more draconian provisions proved largely a dead letter (Thomas 1978).

Alternatives to legal divorce were an agreed separation or simple desertion. Marital splits of this sort were by no means uncommon among the poor, whose unions were vulnerable to the vicissitudes of harsh economic conditions. On occasion, better-off people also separated without recourse to the church courts; sometimes the arrangements were formalized in a written agreement or supervised by secular magistrates (Stretton 2007). But, generally, unlicensed separations were looked on askance by the authorities. Moreover, for everyone from the middling ranks upward, marriage was so important as an economic partnership and basis for social status that it was only in the most dire circumstances that couples would contemplate separation. Death was far more likely to end a union prematurely, yet even given the prevailing high rates of mortality, the median duration of marriage may have been as long as twenty years. There was thus much scope for misery if things went wrong.

Marital Relations

Establishing a satisfactory *modus vivendi* was hence of the greatest importance: the plethora of contemporary advice, the large numbers of cases bearing on marital unhappiness that in one guise or another came before the courts, and the tensions recorded in contemporary letters and diaries, all bear witness to the difficulties of the task. There are a number of important reasons why it is hard to generalize about marital relations in this period. It is not merely that so much depended on personality and circumstance, and on such factors as a greater or lesser age gap between the spouses: there were also some real, deep-seated tensions in contemporary attitudes. The fact that marriage was supposed to be both an economic and an emotional partnership entailed many pitfalls. Men expected a portion with their brides, whether a few pounds and some household goods at lower social levels, or the hundreds or even thousands of pounds that were given with the daughters of the gentry and nobility. Women and their families, on the other hand, expected assurance of adequate support during the marriage and provision for possible widowhood. Some marriages, such as that of Francis Willoughby to Elizabeth Littleton in the reign of Elizabeth, seem to have been blighted from the outset by disappointed financial expectations (Friedman 1989). Disagreements about the disposal of the woman's property were also a factor. Married women – *femes covert* – in theory had very few proprietary rights, but land held in their own name at marriage remained theirs (although the husband took the income), while a “separate estate” for the married woman was sometimes secured by means of a trust (Erickson 1993). Marital difficulties could result if either a husband felt his wife was withholding financial assistance or if the woman feared that the man was ruining the household economy.

But material conditions were only one possible source of tension. In the case of the Willoughbys, the interference of relatives and the machinations of servants within the household were complicating factors that must have affected many other couples too. Conventionally love was supposed to grow within marriage, but many husbands and wives can have had in advance very little real knowledge of each other and the process of mutual discovery was bound to be hazardous, not

least because of the straitjacket of contemporary expectations of husband–wife relations. It was a commonplace that husbands should exercise authority and wives owed them the duty of obedience. Yet even the most optimistic patriarchal theorist recognized that this was easier said than done, demanding not merely an unlikely degree of female compliance but also a level of skill and responsibility on the part of the husband that simply could not be guaranteed. The use of marital violence to enforce obedience became an increasingly contested issue in this period. Traditionally the law had allowed a man to administer “moderate correction” to his spouse, but in the late sixteenth century the legal commentator William Lambarde advised men to be circumspect in using this power, to “keep the law of God, and do nothing against honesty” (Lambarde 1581, 138). Meanwhile the Church’s official homily on matrimony roundly forbade wife-beating, as did a host of later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Protestant divines. A few allowed it, but only in extreme circumstances. There is much evidence that wives, for their part, expected affectionate and fair dealing, while it would seem that the church courts took matrimonial cruelty to include not merely physical violence but also lack of provision, harsh facial gestures, verbal abuse, and the tearing or “ruffling” of the woman’s clothes. Yet wife-beating undoubtedly persisted, while court cases bear testimony to the pitiful cruelty to which it could on occasion degenerate (Amussen 1994; Bailey and Giese 2013).

Adultery, Cuckoldry and “Riding Skimmington”

In relation to the drama, it is some of the more extreme expressions of marital disharmony that are most relevant. In a sense most dramatically piquant was the situation where the wife turned the patriarchal world upside down and herself beat her husband. In real life this was the signal for a “riding” or, as the custom was called in some parts, “riding skimmington”: a noisy, mocking demonstration in which a man or an effigy was carried on a pole or “cowlstaff” or ridden on a horse, sometimes face to tail, to the accompaniment of the “rough music” of pots and pans, the discharge of guns and fireworks, and derisive hoots and raucous laughter (Figure 10.5 and Figure 10.6). Some of these popular enactments were so elaborate as to qualify as a form of folk drama. Moreover, they were more complex than a mere corrective or quasi-judicial sanction; they embodied a jocular element that testified to Everyman’s experience of the day-to-day conflicts between patriarchal prescriptions and the realities of husband/wife relationships. The motif was occasionally displayed on stage in the professional theater, as in Heywood and Brome’s *Late Lancashire Witches*. Moreover the elaborate symbolism of skimmington rides, including images of inversion or reversal and discordant noise expressive of disorder, had affinities with the motifs that were, with infinitely more sophistication, expressed in the contemporary masque and antimasque (Ingram 1984).

Infidelity was even more central to the drama. Neither the law nor contemporary moralists tolerated adultery in either party, but a deeply entrenched double standard was for many men a sufficient license to roam. Some wives might upbraid the errant husband, “bidding him go to his whores!” but many must have been powerless. On the other hand, suspicion of adultery on the wife’s part was enough to arouse even a moderate man to passionate fury. Churchmen who denounced the double standard nonetheless conceded that in its effects a wife’s adultery was more disruptive than that of a husband, in raising doubts about paternity if not actually subverting inheritances, and in fomenting dangerous quarrels between men. The strength of patriarchal principles, moreover, and the public and political significance of household and family, gave a



*Well worth to scourge, so weake A patch, And cause the Boyes there at make games.
Who wth so strong, A whore would match. By ryding thus, to both their shames:*

Figure 10.5 A wife beats her husband with a bunch of keys; a “riding” occurs in the background. From *English Customs* (1628), plate 9. Folger Shakespeare Library Shelfmark: STC 10408.6. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

special edge to female deception. A man whose wife had been unfaithful was thereby made a “cuckold” and the object of derision. Contemporaries saw this situation in terms of a man’s loss of control of his wife’s body, which raised doubts about his ability to satisfy her sexually, his capacity to govern his household, and even perhaps his fitness for any kind of public office – in brief, about his manhood. Accusations or underhand aspersions of cuckoldry – often expressed in finger signs or the actual display of horns or antlers, the ancient symbol of the cuckold – touched a man’s honor to the quick. To be an unwitting cuckold was bad; to know oneself such was worse; to be exposed was a disaster, especially as failure to respond would condemn the man to the utterly ignominious status of “wittol” or complaisant cuckold.

But how to react, and how to guard against the danger? To be unduly suspicious of a wife, and hence reveal the fear of being cuckolded, was itself ridiculous. To respond ineffectually was to compound disaster. A judicial response was fraught with difficulty; a violent one could lead to tragedy. The powerful emotions associated with cuckoldry, and the sheer psychological and social complexities to which the situation gave rise, ensured that the theme, with infinite variations, was ubiquitous in Renaissance drama. It was particularly piquant in the burgeoning metropolis, where – at least in dramatists’ imaginations – city wives, resplendent in gloves and ruffs and avid for attention, were game for town gallants. The Restoration theater, benefiting from the presence of actresses on the stage, was to develop further the dramatic possibilities of the theme (Foyster 1999, chs. 4–5).



*The world is turned, upside downe ~ As by their wheelen to gaine least riches;
When wives so on their Husbonds frowne ~ Shall forst give leaue, to weare y breeches:*

Figure 10.6 The world turned upside down. From *English Customs* (1628), plate 12. Folger Shakespeare Library Shelfmark: STC 10408.6. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Parents and Children

Late age of marriage and extended lactation periods meant that most couples produced only a few children; larger families were confined to the well off. Relations between parents and young children were less important as a theme in drama than they were in real life, but significant nonetheless. The idea of Lawrence Stone (1977) that relationships were cold and harshly authoritarian, and that parents invested little emotional capital in their offspring, especially when they were very young, has been rejected. Diaries, letters, and other sources indicate that both fathers and mothers often took delight in the birth of children, doted over their infancy and childhood, anxiously strove to keep them in health, eased them as far as they could through their illnesses, and suffered much grief if they died before they grew up. There were considerable regional variations, but on average about a quarter of all children were dead before they reached the age of ten. Reactions to the death of an only son, especially if there was small hope of begetting another, might be colored by concerns about inheritance and the descent of estates, but this was inevitable given the economic and dynastic importance of family and household, and the sense of emotional loss was real enough (Stone 1977, 66–75, 105–14, 159–78, 194–5, 409; cf. Pollock 1983; Houlbrooke 1984, chs. 6–7; Thomas 1989; Newton 2012).

Conventional wisdom held that to spare the rod was to spoil the child. However, moralists were constantly chiding parents (especially mothers) for doing just that, “cockering” their

children with undue leniency; diary evidence, as far as it goes, suggests that physical punishment was a rare and usually reluctant response to childish faults. Nonetheless, this was a society in which the whipping of children was at least in principle regarded as right. The rod was wielded with vigor by many contemporary schoolmasters, and the punishment could be administered in a family setting even to adolescent children: the news writer John Chamberlain reported in 1612 that the Bishop of Bristol's "eldest [son] of 19 or 20 year old killed himself with a knife to avoid the disgrace of breeching." His offence had been to lose money at tennis (McClure 1939, 1: 335).

Parents were, along with schoolmasters, schoolmistresses (for girls), or private tutors, vital agents in the education of their offspring – including religious and moral instruction and the rules of civility as well as book learning. Mothers had responsibility for daughters, and also for sons until they were five or six and thus old enough to be taken out of long clothes and put into breeches; thereafter responsibility lay with the father. The duty to educate also extended to other children and youngsters living in the household, as servants or otherwise. Lady Margaret Hoby, for example, recorded in her diary for November 3, 1599, "I did read a while to my work-women," one of many such entries (Moody 1998, 34). By the time children reached late adolescence the focus of education shifted toward the challenges that awaited them when they were beyond the tutelage of parents. It was at this stage that so many "Letters of Advice" or "Books of Instruction" were written, often plagiarized shamelessly from the famous models provided by Lord Burghley and others (Wright 1962). Long before, the thoughts of careful parents had turned to making provision for their children's future, securing the means of professional training or binding them apprentice if they were not to inherit sufficient land to maintain them. A good marriage was the other object in view. The anxious expectations of parents, eager to secure their children's place in life and the continuance of their own name before they themselves left this world, were the foil to the passions and follies of the young.

Historiography and Sources

The focus of historical writing on household, family and domestic relations in early modern England has shifted over the years, as have the controversies generated by research. Much pioneering work was done in the 1970s and 1980s, when the "history of the family" and the "history of childhood" as such were in vogue. Both were often set firmly within a demographic framework. Spirited reactions to some of Lawrence Stone's more extreme interpretations of family relations and long-term change eventually settled into a consensus that stressed gradual change within a broad framework of continuity (Wrightson 1998). Since then the direction of research has tilted markedly toward cultural history and the study of gender – not only vastly increasing our sophisticated understanding of relations between men and women, husbands and wives, but also raising a variety of theoretical issues about the nature of "patriarchy" and its contradictions in Tudor and Stuart society (Fletcher 1995; Capp 2003; Shepard 2003). These fresh approaches have thrown up new differences of opinion. Whereas some historians stress that gender relations in the period were fundamentally oppositional or conflictual, embedded in a deeply misogynistic culture, others take a somewhat more positive view and are more inclined to see the roles of husband and wife as complementary – albeit subject to numerous tensions and ambiguities (Hubbard 2012; Wilson 2013).

The use of sources has likewise mutated. Peter Laslett (1976) famously warned historical sociologists that to use literary materials to recover the family life of the past was to look "the

wrong way through the telescope.” His preferred approach was through records such as household listings and parish registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials – sources that can be made to yield quantitative data. Yet such “hard” evidence is sparse and by no means easy to interpret. For example, the “fact” that the average household size in England from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century was 4.75 persons has been criticized as a “meaningless mean.” To supplement the demographic data, historians have had recourse to a wide range of discursive sources, including autobiographies, diaries, letters, and family histories; estate papers, account books, wills and inventories; and records from both the ecclesiastical and secular courts dealing with marriage, divorce, sexual transgressions, and property disputes within families. The interpretive problems that these sources pose have been much sifted, and in recent years – in line with historians’ engagement with the “linguistic turn” – have been read with increasing sensitivity to the power of language to construct rather than simply reflect reality.

A source so widely used as to justify singling it out from the rest is the corpus of works on the themes of choosing a wife, marriage, and household government, although historians have come to realize that this material is more varied and problematic than was once assumed (Davies 1977; Todd 1987, ch. 4; Collinson 1988, ch. 3; Wall 2000, ch. 5; Peters 2003, ch. 13). It can no longer be taken for granted that authors were simply reflecting contemporary ideals, far less actual practice; they were often writing for particular polemical purposes and this context needs to be understood. More basically, the heavily prescriptive works of “godly” ministers, such as Henry Smith’s *A Preparative to Mariage* (1591), William Whately’s *A Bride-Bush* (1617), and William Gouge’s *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622) – themselves by no means entirely homogeneous in form and content – need to be distinguished from superficially similar productions by authors of a very different stamp, such as *A Briefe and Pleasant Discourse of Duties in Marriage* (1568) by Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels, or *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (1615) by Alexander Niccholes.

Such works, often in dialogue form, in turn relate to a variety of other kinds of advice literature, and also to an extraordinary range of moral exhortations, diatribes, satires, pamphlets, and ballads – many of them designed to be accessible to popular and unlearned audiences – that bear on husband–wife relations and other aspects of domestic life. Historians, influenced by cultural studies and hence attuned to the idea that literary “representations” are objects of importance in their own right, are increasingly exploring such works (Sharpe 1986; Reinke-Williams 2009). Occasionally, clusters of such material published around the same time – as one provocative work sparked others – signify important moments of contemporary debate. The most famous example is the clutch of pamphlets written in response to Joseph Swetnam’s *Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615). On examination, both the diatribe itself and reactions to it prove to be more complex and nuanced than at first sight appears – further testimony to the great variety of attitudes and behavior in this period (Bayman and Southcombe 2010).

The *Araignment* debate stimulated a play, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* (1620). More generally these popular pamphlets, squibs, and ballads, designed to entertain and to provoke yet addressing serious moral and social issues, have obvious affinities with the drama. The plays of the period, while not a simple representation of contemporary manners, did provide a commentary – sometimes glancing, sometimes direct – on issues of courtship, marriage, and family relations, and were hence among the means by which people at the time were stimulated to imagine and reflect on their own experiences. To take a primary example, if love was already an important component of courtship and marriage when the period began, the experience of “seeing and reading plays and romances” (as the Countess of Warwick later recalled) can hardly have made it

less so (Crocker 1848, 4). Indeed, it is arguable that the drama, along with other forms of literature, not only helped to heighten an awareness of romantic love, but contributed to other changes in sensibility too. In this sense drama can itself be seen as part of the history of the family in this period, and a source that historians need to explore more fully.

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Religious Persuasions, c.1580–c.1620

Lori Anne Ferrell

The English Reformation is not a myth, but neither is it a simple set of established facts. As we excavate dense layers of the historical account, revisiting the confessional battles of the past 450 years, we find that the labels have lost their descriptive precision, if not their polemical power. “Anglicanism” was a Restoration construct burnished to a high gothic glister by the Victorians. “Puritan” is a term so slippery it has finally eluded all historiographical grasp and now seems destined to spend the balance of its days enclosed in inverted commas. “Catholic” no longer equals “Recusant”; no longer can “Reformation” be modified by the adjective “Protestant” alone. Yet all these terms were employed or even coined by early moderns, and have been preserved for our consideration in manuscript archives and rare books libraries.

It can be hard to find certain evidence of religious transformation in the earlier decades of the English sixteenth century. Early modern people could, and often did, resist the inducements employed by the monarchs, institutions, and ecclesiastics who initiated and engineered what we now call “The Reformation.” Habits and customs died hard, even – or perhaps especially – among the merely “nominal” Christians who in every premodern age constituted a majority of English subjects. When viewed in this context of popular belief and long-standing practice, social historians explain, England’s reformation represented more loss than gain: loss of sensible economies of salvation; loss of comforting rituals of death and remembrance; loss of community cohesion. Governmental policy might well have forced a person to do something, but it could never have persuaded a person to believe anything. For these chroniclers, there is little if any “true” reformation to be found in sixteenth-century England.

Their arguments, however, tend to associate *reformation* with the heart-warming, Wesleyan style of *conversion*, privileging the damascene, individual experience over public, corporate behavior to make their case. Other scholars have thus taken issue with this model, claiming instead that England’s culture, its Church, and its habits of religious thought were almost entirely Protestantized by the early seventeenth century. These more culturally and politically

oriented historians point to the vernacular Bibles and Books of Common Prayer placed by order in every parish church, deanery, and cathedral in England; note the reformed learning of a new generation of committed clergy; detect a strong Calvinist consensus in the Church established; and reckon that Puritanism was a distinguishable phenomenon to be found inside, not outside, that Church's bounds. They are comfortable calling *conformity* a perfectly legitimate expression of *conversion* in an age of state-regulated orthodoxy, and count all such evidence of reformation's success.

The scope of current historiography forces us, then, to acknowledge the remarkable individuality and diversity of early modern religious life. Which histories should we privilege? Different methodologies produce divergent narratives; none can – or should – have the explanatory power to cancel another out entirely. If most English men and women were not naturally disposed to Protestantism in the sixteenth century, and if many people in England remained staunchly Catholic right through the seventeenth century, then any analysis of Tudor-Stuart religion must begin by acknowledging its characteristically paradoxical and contested nature. By 1580, England was indeed a “Protestant nation,” but it was still involved in the long process of becoming a “nation of Protestants” (Haigh 1993).

Faith by Statute

Under the earlier Tudors, the population of this “nation” consisted primarily of ignorant, unconvinced, or dissident Christian souls. England's relatively rapid religious acculturation may have originated in the arbitrary force of governmental legislation, but Protestantism, a religion of the word preached and promulgated, possessed an enviable tactical advantage in an age of fast-growing and innovative print culture. Enthusiastic reformers were able to capitalize on the opportunity given them by monarchs determined to be Protestant; their evangelistic work, however, was never easy. Protestantism did succeed in England, but it prevailed against a formidable competitor – a comfortable old religion with much to offer a typically traditionalist early modern society.

Successful legislation had to be followed up with successful teaching and inculcation. And in those pedagogical and propagandistic endeavors, 1580 to 1620 represent signal years in the re-creation of England's religious identity, spanning its greatest period of reforming ambition and optimism. It is in 1580 we first note the widespread reconstruction of this malingering, late medieval society: a kingdom once saturated in medieval religious representation, now observably Protestant in nearly all aspects of its culture (Collinson 1982). This extraordinary shift reflected the efforts of a newly trained and highly motivated clergy in English churches, courts, universities, and parishes. This energetic ministry provided remedial teaching in an array of texts: vernacular catechisms and Latin dialogues; rude confessional propaganda and learned theological discourses; sermons first preached to multitudes and pious practices designed for private souls. Their words went on to take vibrant life in print and reprint, or in circulated and recirculated manuscripts. Evangelical Calvinism was on the rise, and reform on its terms now seemed not only possible but entirely, tantalizingly probable.

To understand how extraordinary were the achievements of England's clergy, and with what new tools and expectations they undertook their labors in the reign of Elizabeth I, we need first to cast a backward glance and to consider the religious settlements of the Tudor monarchs. Religion was bred into the bones of early modern English society. It was bred, however, by habits

of thought derived from a Catholic past. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, in many important respects, Roman Catholicism in England was thriving. Whether or not laypeople understood the significance of the Church of England's inclusion in a world bounded by the dictates of papal Christendom or indulged in intricate theological speculations on the Eucharist, local religious activities offered them many opportunities to celebrate and honor their familial practices, their regional singularity, and their belief in God. Religion was a matter of routine practices, and the world turned on piety, tradition, and the maintenance of societal harmony.

These social and cultural assumptions were severely tested and then permanently fractured in the sixteenth century. In the 1530s, Henry VIII broke with the universal western church that he now called, contemptuously, the "Church of Rome," claiming royal supremacy over the Church in his kingdom. The Henrician reign was ultimately a trying time for nascent Protestants, especially those churchmen at the center of power, for Henry's enthusiasm for religious change waxed and waned with the fortunes of his domestic politics and the patronage networks of the five wives who succeeded Katherine of Aragon. At the time of Henry's death in 1547, the English Church was delivering a number of mixed messages: the mass no longer contained prayers for the Pope, but it was still performed in Latin. Statues and paintings of saints could be found in churches; so could, however, the Christian Bible in vernacular, newly translated from the Hebrew and Greek.

That new translation of the Bible had been ordered into existence by an exceptional act of state. Henry VIII's "Great" Bible of 1539 was an achievement surpassing even his government's remarkable run of antipapal legislation throughout the tumultuous decade of the 1530s. Those laws broke financial and legal ties with Rome and redistributed the wealth of England's many monastic foundations, thus making some English families wealthier and many canon lawyers busier. But the idea that the Gospel would now speak in the language of the English people made a far more significant, and far-reaching, religious and cultural impact. *The Byble in Englyshe*, placed by royal command in all English churches, did not so much celebrate the uniqueness of English Christianity as it did England's participation in a larger European Reformation, one that placed a humanist-inspired, newly translated Bible at the center of its spiritual and political concerns (Daniell 2003).

Protestants still comprised a minority of the population when Henry died in 1547, but under Henry's sole male successor, they finally held governmental power in significant numbers. Parishes were often reluctant and always slow to obey governmental injunctions to reform; the Edwardian Reformation needed time and attention paid to its progress by a king in his majority, two things it did not possess, in order to become a comprehensive cultural and social reality. What did take firm and lasting hold was the Edwardian reformation of the liturgy, a singular achievement both spiritual and secular.

The first prayer book (1549) of Edward VI – the second (1552) had no time to be implemented – stands as the most potent harbinger of *English* (as opposed to *Protestant*) Reformation. With its traditional liturgical structure taken almost entirely from the Latin mass but voiced in the vernacular, the Book of Common Prayer eventually became the premier transmitter of a uniquely English Protestant vocabulary. By the end of the seventeenth century, its popularity surpassed that of any other expressive feature of English religion. What distinguished it in the sixteenth century, however, was simply its sheer reach: as the official script for all religious observances, printed and comprehensively distributed by statute, renewed by law at the succession of every succeeding Protestant monarch, and used to explain and instill new religious ceremonies (not to mention the political authority that underwrote them), the Book of Common Prayer was by far the most effective governing instrument ever devised by the Tudor state.

Having reigned a scant half-dozen years, Edward died in 1553, taking with him any hope for thorough religious reformation. A Catholic Reformation began under Edward's successor, his elder sister Mary I. First undoing the acts of state that had once established England's Protestantism, the Queen restored and updated the old religion by the same legislative and ecclesiastical methods – although whether she did so with the uniquely bloody vengeance that her Protestant enemies recall is a matter of ongoing scholarly controversy. Committed Protestants faced several choices under Mary, the least desirable and most usual being grudging conformity to the state. Protestants with money and Continental connections could go into exile, but many obdurate believers remained in England, and some even paid the ultimate and awe-inspiring public consequences. These are the woodcut heroes of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Dayes* (first published 1563), one of the most influential books ever printed in English. If the blood of the martyrs is indeed the seed of the Church, we might see presaged here a permanent Protestant future for England, presented in all its engraved gore and glory, in what later came to be called "Foxe's Book of Martyrs."

Regnal longevity, or lack of it, also played its part. England had barely achieved full communion with Rome when Mary died in 1558, having reigned no longer than her brother. Their sister, Elizabeth, who was known to have Protestant sympathies, succeeded to the throne of England and stayed there for nearly a half century, finally giving governmental reformation enough time to effect social and cultural change. Elizabeth I's Protestantism seemed peculiarly undefined and undetailed, however, and she proceeded with a deliberate caution in matters of religious reform that was often too politic to please her more evangelical subjects. Among these unhappy firebrands were many of the Queen's new bishops (the ones she inherited from Mary, to a man opposed to the Royal Supremacy, having resigned), most of whom had returned from Continental exile with an ingrained suspicion of monarchical intentions in matters of religion and ambitious plans to enact the magisterial reforms they had experienced in places like John Calvin's Geneva.

Geneva had also given these churchmen a taste for John Calvin's doctrines. While Calvinism, with its uncompromising central tenet of predestination, might seem harshly unyielding to modern observers, for a majority of late Elizabethan clergy and university professors it provided a secure and logical bulwark against the vagaries of the Roman Catholic theology of salvation, which depended on human free will for its operational validity. Calvin's God was too mighty, too majestic to calculate the salvation of humankind on a sliding scale made up of their attempts to do good works. The first and final choice was God's, and since God had made his choice of the saved and the damned before creation (thereby removing all manner of human merit out of contention) it was best not to look into its details too closely, but to allow ministers learned in its intricacies to expound it in the pulpit.

This prospect was, understandably, attractive to clever university men preparing to take orders; we accordingly detect a "Calvinist consensus" in the Church of England by 1580 (Tyacke 1987). Beyond the ranks of this learned ministry, however, that consensus was built, rather less firmly, on a studied vagueness in the articles of religion on the point of predestination. The seventeenth of the English Articles of Religion of 1563 had described the Calvinist theology of predestination as "a comfortable doctrine." But whether most folks found comfort in, or understood, the idea that God had already decided their eternal fates before the creation of the world was a question that mostly exercised theologians and controversialists. And some powerful Church of England clergy in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I – men like Richard Bancroft (Archbishop 1604; d. 1610) and William Laud (Archbishop 1633, d. 1645) – steadily opposed

many of Calvinism's tenets and held their high posts, as well as their increasingly strident opinions, well into and beyond the Jacobean era.

Elizabeth's political and ecclesiastical ruling class was predominately reformed (often along Continental, often Calvinist, lines); her laity and many of her parish priests were far less acquainted with what reformation required, theologically, liturgically, and practically. Before 1558 it had been possible for a theologically uneducated priest to serve a parish: all the man needed to have was enough Latin to say the mass and enough English to read out an ecclesiastical directive or homily. This disparity between lay and ministerial knowledge, and between levels of clergy education altogether, presented a challenge that was enthusiastically taken up in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, some of which became hotbeds of enthusiastic reforming ideals. As they had in the reign of Edward VI, English theologians, canon lawyers, and ministers corresponded regularly with their European counterparts, inviting them to take up teaching posts in English universities and seeking their advice, encouragement, and comparative evaluations. By the end of the century, all ministers ordained in the Church of England had earned or were earning university degrees, if not always appropriate vocational preparation (O'Day 1979). The occasional dolt or timeserver notwithstanding, the learned ministry of England had become, as Patrick Collinson (1982) has noted, *stupor mundi*, and their engagement and industry set the shining tone for the next half-century of English reformation.

Religious Temperaments

By 1580, then, the strengths of the Protestant Church of England had been established, and they were one and the same as the elements of its weakness. It was, in the words of the historian Conrad Russell (1990), "a church designed by a committee," having tacked a well-reformed, Continentally inspired Protestant theology onto a traditional, semi-Catholic liturgical blueprint. This purpose-built architecture was thus exquisitely vulnerable to any shift, no matter how small, in the political fortunes of Protestantism. The tension created between England's self-professed identity as a member of the European reformed tradition and its emerging sense of its national Church as uniquely "English" produced the conditions of seismic instability that would increasingly characterize the condition of its religious settlement in the early seventeenth century.

After 1580, the fervent ministry of a rising generation of university-trained Calvinists established cohorts of increasingly reformed believers in many parts of the country. But the "Calvinist consensus" uniting English clergy and theologically sophisticated laypeople was a self-selected association that left many outside, especially when they lived outside the environs of London, Cambridge, or Oxford. Ignorance persisted, in part because early modern print culture was hardly ubiquitous and literacy far from widespread. The Protestant message, so well distributed in London and the southeast, had not yet reached all corners of England. Despite the reforms enacted by three Tudor governments, and perhaps because they did not go far enough, traditional religion and community practices persisted in many localities, undisturbed by the call to Bible reading, the responsibilities of Protestant catechizing, or the arse-numbing edification of the three-hour Calvinist sermon. This resistance to the Gospel inspired fervent debates among a vociferous cadre of "hot" Protestants: when was a brother or sister's incapacity, in the end, simply a cover for willful, traitorous recalcitrance? When would the monarch, the episcopate, or the godly magistrate put an end to persistent popery?

England's confessional confusion reflected the maddening ambiguity of Elizabeth I's governmental style. While professing concern over the persistence of Catholicism, her government did not so much deliver further Protestant reform as refuse to rule it out. Many extra-Scriptural worship practices hated by stringent Protestants for their popish provenance – signing with the cross or kneeling at prayer, for example – were ordered in the directives of the prayer book, but, as the prayer book also pointed out, they were “not to be esteemed equal with God's law.” In theory, such actions were adjudged *adiaphora*, “things indifferent,” and were important only to the maintenance of both church order and the authority of the royal supremacy. No one in this period, however, seemed indifferent to *adiaphora* in the least: the work of reform was now fought on the battlegrounds of ceremony in an ongoing struggle over which aspects of sacramental worship, if any, were essential to salvation. Elizabeth's conformist churchmen recommended the practices to their stricter brethren as a matter of decorum only. Hotter Protestants would have to content themselves with the well-reformed state of English doctrine, recognize the Queen's conservatism in matters *adiaphoric*, and wait for better times and a more thoroughly reformed monarch.

Even after more than three decades of official Protestantism, committed Catholics were still to be found in England. “Popery” survived and even thrived in several surreptitious guises. “Church papists” practiced their religion privately while outwardly conforming. Wealthy recusants, long-standing noble families whose attachment to the old religion could easily outlive Tudor monarchs, were able quietly to harbor priests as members of their extended households, and to pay the stiff fines for nonattendance at church (Questier 1996). They also sent their sons and daughters abroad to train as nuns and priests; after the Pope's excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570, these sons, now missionaries, returned to England bent on instituting a “Catholic reformation” based on new directives issued from the Council of Trent. The foreign-trained Jesuit priests preached resistance theory rather than the politic, conformable clandestinity espoused by quietist (if still illicit) local priests. Theirs was a strategy derived from the early Christians, and their successes in Yorkshire and London possessed a shock value equal to Foxe (Lake and Questier 2011). In the far north of England especially, the age of martyrs seemed at everlasting fever pitch.

Elizabeth's indecisiveness in matters of marriage also dismayed her councilors and inadvertently raised the hopes of radicals on both sides of the religious spectrum; in the increasingly vexed question of the succession, they jumped at the chance it offered to institute extraordinary changes in government. In early modern England, religion and government were inextricably intertwined, and so both Puritan sectarian and Catholic loyalist blamed the failure of their respective religious agendas on the monarch's final authority over matters of the Church first proclaimed by Henry VIII. The spectrum of clandestine speculation and planning, all potentially treasonous if uncovered, ranged from daring assassination plots (often centering around the dynastic claims of Mary, Queen of Scots or the Spanish Infanta) to the equally dangerous bruited of a “monarchical republic” with Parliament deciding, in the absence of an indisputable claimant to the throne, the next succession. Such plots and counterplots made for uneasy and often fictitious or slanderous allies in the matter of the Queen's successor and the future settlement of English religion. In the end, however, the prevailing claim of the Queen's cousin, the indisputably Protestant, even Calvinist, James VI of Scotland, settled the English monarchical succession question – if only until 1660, and, after that, 1688.

International events also made possible the public cohesion of Protestant opinion. The vanquishing of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was seen as a providential victory and a turning point in England's religious self-fashioning. Writers, preachers, and parliamentary orators touted

England's status as an "elect nation," in so doing signaling the triumph of Calvinist cultural representation. England now knew what it was not – it was not Catholic. However, it still did not exactly know what kind of not-Catholic it was: by the end of the sixteenth century, Protestantism, on the Continent as well as in the British isles, had subdivided into several distinct confessions and many different practices.

While a fairly generalized anti-Catholicism became one powerful defining motif of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century culture, the characteristic vocabulary of this animus was eventually applied not only to English Catholics (whose numbers were declining with the passing of every generation) but also to those English Protestants who were less than enthusiastic about Calvinism. In inevitable turnabout, Protestants less enthusiastic about Continental Calvinism began at the same time to associate Calvinism with nonconformity. By the turn of the century, controversialists of all Protestant stripes were experimenting with such dangerous appropriations and extensions of otherwise ill-defined categories such as "Puritan" and "papist" to discredit their religious competitors. The battle for England's soul had turned intraconfessional.

Such unstable semantic conditions set the context for the emergence and definition of the new enemy – "Puritanism" – in the final two decades of the sixteenth century. We should not overestimate the numerical strength of these "hotter sort of Protestants": most people in the Church of England were content with the Queen's pace of reform, if indeed they thought about such things at all. Puritanism, an evangelical Calvinist movement emergent in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, represented a powerful minority interest in the Church of England, one that provided doctrinal quality control and persistently loyal opposition to traditional ceremonies. At the turn of the sixteenth century, Puritans were the "leaven in the loaf" of the English Church. But when their demands became too many or their complaints too shrill, or when they took on issues, like episcopacy, that threatened the governmental structure of the Church, these institutional insiders could threaten the culture in which they claimed an essential role and set off incendiary societal conflict.

These easily ignitable passions remind us that "moderation" was not a spiritual ideal in early modern England: not for the hottest of Protestants, and not even for most conformists. Moderation was instead a social ideal, connected to older traditions of good fellowship and community harmony; it could never be applied to such a serious business as salvation. Problems arose when the boundaries between these social and religious categories were crossed. The intolerant disparity between social ecumenism and religious conviction led to the self-contradictory religious politics of the Jacobean era.

Most convinced Elizabethan Calvinists thought more reform was in the offing once the unabashedly Calvinist James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603. Certainly the times were auspicious. After a shaky start, with England's religious confession transformed with the death of each succeeding Tudor monarch, the nation had finally enjoyed nearly fifty years of confessional stability under the last Tudor queen (a stability based on longevity that was probably directly related to the age's greatest instability: the Queen's refusal to marry and produce an heir of her body). The Catholic past was passing into cloudy memory: now babies were baptized, not converted, into state Protestantism.

James came to the throne not only with male heirs, but also with a thorough education in reformed doctrine and the stated determination to work through the religious issues left unsolved upon Elizabeth's death. An attachment to the word preached and a detestation of all things popish united Puritans to their less enthusiastic brethren in the Church of England; these were

values shared by the new King, who entered his new kingdom with a genuine liking for the preaching ministry, an indifference to the more picky aspects of liturgical form, and a healthy regard for his own theological reasoning. James I was disinclined to persecute either Puritans or Catholics stringently, and he and the majority of his episcopate were willing to “wink” at minor issues of nonconformity in the interest of social peace. Over most of the course of his reign (1603–25), the King managed a religious settlement that was in fact far-seeing: remarkable for its theological consensus and nonconfrontational policy. Very few ministers were actually deprived for nonconformity under James; most were allowed their scruples as long as they professed allegiance to the royal supremacy.

There were limits to James’s generosity, however, as the Puritans first found out in 1604. At a conference held at Hampton Court, unimpeachably conformist spokesmen for the Puritan cause requested relief from more onerous and *adiaphoric* forms of ecclesiastical discipline. They saw their agenda rejected by the King and their defense of nonconformist conscientious objection made a public mockery by some members of the Jacobean episcopate. And it soon became clear that, despite the King’s sincere interest in presiding over a broad array of opinions on liturgical conformity, James and certain of his bishops and Court preachers actually intended this display of monarchical tolerance and moderation to be a monitory example, to those whose demands for further reform could then consequently be labeled as “immoderate.” Adding to the impression of increasing social conflict, the King’s “moderation” led him to allow some churchmen, from the pulpit of the Chapel Royal and in print, to broadcast their opinion that liturgical conformity was not simply a matter of *adiaphora* but of sacramental necessity (Ferrell 1998).

What seems to have moved the goalposts permanently was another controversy over marital politics and succession. In the final decade of his reign, James’s ecumenist tendencies in matters of international diplomacy led him to arrange a marriage between the son who would inherit England’s throne and a Spanish Catholic princess. These matters of state had far-reaching religious implications. Angered by opposition to the “Spanish Match” issuing from Calvinist parliamentarians, James increasingly made common cause with churchmen whose liturgical opinions were high ceremonialist, whose doctrinal persuasions were anti-Calvinist, and whose ever-expanding definition of “Puritanism” now seemed to encompass opponents of the King’s pacifist foreign policy, Church of England “hot” Protestants, and, most dangerously, actual sectarians, those few extremists who not only criticized but also dared to defy the all-encompassing ordinances of the Church of England. This emergent rhetoric openly equated Calvinism with Puritanism, and then, by extension, Puritanism with sectarianism, denying the hotter sort of Protestant legitimate participation in the national Church. The years of Calvinist ascendancy were over. To more pessimistic observers, the sacerdotal and sacramental obsessions of the anti-Calvinists raised dark issues: of the resurgence of popery in the Court and the end of reformation in the Church.

This ecclesiastical disaster had far-reaching cultural consequences. The reign of James I has been justly recognized as a period of considerable peace at home and abroad. From 1603 to 1625, however, we can also detect the gradual dissolution of English Protestantism into increasingly bitter, irreconcilable internal factions. In this deceptive calm before the storm of civil war, the Jacobean era was a literary laboratory for Protestant internecine warfare. Enabled by the most prolific and innovative press in Europe, this laboratory produced an unending stream of learned theological and polemical publications.

Religious Reading

Among the religious publications of this period were also cheap pious chapbooks and religious broadsides: godly ballads, woodcut moralities, and simple catechisms. Their readership was not confined to the less educated classes; they appear to have been less controversial and more universally popular. It is often hard to identify such works as specifically “Protestant,” for they were an amalgam of oral and visual cultural elements and thus blended traditional and current cultural expectations. As Tessa Watt (1991) has pointed out, they operated largely outside of the Church’s sphere and satisfied needs other than that of religious education: they entertained, they provided inspirational models, and they taught people lessons about life. To read these tracts is to recognize the long continuities that characterized England’s social world, and to understand that the religious interests of ordinary readers were not always one and the same as those that exercised their clerics and statesmen.

This is not to say, however, that complex theology was above ordinary readers’ heads, or that all English men and women were unaware of, or uninterested in, the great doctrinal and sacramental issues of the day. Then as now, publication records relate to popularity, and from the last decades of the sixteenth century, we find English presses busily churning out religious pedagogical, or “how-to,” books aimed at an aspiring audience captivated by Calvinist and controversial theology. Works such as William Perkins’ *A Golden Chaine* (1591) featured innovative pedagogical aids: streamlined tables of contents, interactive tables that taught the difference between Protestant and Catholic doctrines, and geometric designs that made the theology of the Eucharist clear. The reach of these texts extended beyond the relatively small ranks of the highly educated clergy, touching off a spark among a potentially influential segment of the laity. The upward expansion of the middlebrow religious print market makes a persuasive case for the power of a Calvinist minority in early modern England. To read these books is to recognize the transformative impact of a challenging and attractive theology.

Along with the Book of Common Prayer, the vernacular Bible was the most formative text of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, but even the Scriptures could not escape contest and competition. The Geneva Bible of 1560, with its many teaching aids and marginal theological commentary, was the favored edition of the hotter sort of Protestant, and its patterns and images can be detected in their controversial literature throughout the entire seventeenth century. The 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible represents the only concession James made to the Puritans, who had petitioned for a corrected edition of the Bible at Hampton Court. The favor was backhanded; James wanted a less theologically specific Bible for his Church, and so the 1611 edition had none of the marginal theological commentary that had made the Geneva Bible so distinctively theological and so potentially revolutionary. In its cadences and its deliberately archaic vernacular, King James’s Bible was Scripture scripted to prayer book standards, its passages corralled and shaped by Cramer’s liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer (Ferrell 2008).

After liturgy, Scripture, and catechisms (Green 2000), the most important literary-religious form in this period was the sermon. These played a central role in all the mediations, spiritual and secular, an unsettled age might require: at Court, in Parliament, and in the parish, preachers broadcast governmental directives, gave religious instruction, and referred subtly (or not so subtly) to current political issues. Their words often went on to a longer life in print. Theatrical, occasional, controversial, and sometimes quite entertaining, sermons were perhaps the genre best suited to capitalize on the theological and rhetorical intricacies of an uncertain age.

They consistently provide the most complete glimpse into the diverse natures of not only England's Protestantism, but also the sheer variety of its public Protestant venues. Sermons before the King or preached at the opening of Parliament by royal favorites like Lancelot Andrewes (d. 1626) remind us that the Elizabethan and Jacobean sermon was equal parts political, exegetical, and theological, and it balanced its elaborate praise of the monarch with a duty to speak freely (if carefully) about failures and abuses of government (Sharpe 1987; Colclough 2005). Sermons preached at rites of passage like marriages and funerals – a genre in which John Donne (d. 1631) had no early modern peer – give valuable insight into cultural attitudes about birth, marriage, and death. And the city-sophisticate preachers like “silver-tongued” Henry Smith (d. 1591) delighted and enthralled his urbane Westminster parish with dramatic flourishes drawn straight from the London stage.

Sermons became so popular in this age that preachers in all venues could attract crowds to rival the stage's, sometimes prompting warnings (from other, perhaps less busy, pulpits) about the consequences of “sermon-gadding,” which, among other things, drew laypeople away from their parish churches and signaled the exercise of personal choice in what was, in this era, supposed to be mandatory, parish-bounded church membership and attendance. Andrewes, an ultra-conformist known for his expositions on the Eucharist, became so concerned that James I preferred sermons to the sacrament that he became well known for preaching *against* preaching to the King and his Court.

Conclusion

When we review the English religious settlement from 1580 to 1620, we see a complicated picture of continuity and change, of the triumph of new doctrine and the persistence of traditional practice. We confront a Church of England marked by a dizzying array of cultural, theological, institutional, and social negotiations. The instability that was inherent in such a confusing situation is hard to detect in the confident language of legislative documentation and can be nearly impossible to identify in the historical accounts of daily life, but the undeniable fact of England's breakdown in the 1640s into civil war and regicide, in the name of religion no less, requires us to look more closely at the preceding years for the subtler evidences of conflict and strain.

Printed words may provide our clearest view of such evidence. In the religious literatures of 1580 to 1620, we see displayed to full effect the multivalent policies, the ambiguous theologies, and the contradictory character of the age itself. But ecclesiastical initiatives and statutes give us only a partial glimpse into this religious world: to understand it fully we must investigate the complex languages of doctrinal dispute, religious pedagogy, and homiletic politics. Any consideration of England's religious temperament in the age of the Renaissance must necessarily include a recognition of the public distribution and the literary influence of religious texts, and of the power these works possessed to shape all aspects of early modern culture and society.

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Science, Natural Philosophy, and New Philosophy in Early Modern England

Barbara H. Traister

Asked about the role of science in contemporary society and thought, no Elizabethan would have understood the question. Although the word “science” was in use as early as the fourteenth century, it meant simply “general knowledge.” In John Redford’s *The Moral Play of Wit and Science* (c.1530–50), for example, the character Wit attempts to marry the extremely desirable Lady Science. He fails miserably at first, falling prey to characters such as Tediousness, Idleness, and Ignorance. Only after several missteps does Wit manage finally to satisfy Lady Science and her father Reason so that the marriage can take place. Clearly Redford’s point is that Wit must take direction from Reason and avoid slothful practices in order to acquire Science (knowledge). Over the course of the sixteenth century, the word “science” refers with increasing frequency to small, defined interactions with the natural world; examples include the “science” of surgery, of mining, or even of mathematics (Harkness 2007, xv). Thus the word came gradually closer to the mechanistic, measurable, cause-and-effect meaning it bears today. Not until the mid-nineteenth century, well beyond the scope of this chapter, did “science” commonly refer to “the intellectual and practical activity encompassing those branches of study that relate to the phenomena of the physical universe and its laws” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 5.b), and not until the twentieth century did many of the now separate scientific “disciplines” become disentangled from one another.

The early modern phrase closest to what “science” means in the twenty-first century is “natural philosophy,” a broad study of the natural world and its relationship to mankind and to God (Principe 2013, 206). Building upon the work of classical writers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Ptolemy, natural philosophy was studied by generations of classical and medieval philosophers. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the natural philosophy of Aristotle and his later followers, such as Ptolemy, Avicenna, Galen, and Roger Bacon, largely shaped the way educated men and women understood and responded to the natural world. That understanding and those responses faced a series of discoveries in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries challenging

and altering many long-standing beliefs about the heavens and earth, and about how the human body worked. These discoveries – particularly in cosmology, medicine, anatomy, mathematics, and chemistry – would eventually result in a transformed worldview, but the old beliefs had remarkable staying power and many remained influential at least into the eighteenth century.

Modern scholars often refer to the major change in the way people perceived and understood the natural world as the Scientific Revolution. If it was a true revolution, however, it developed slowly and unevenly. Its early roots stretch back to the late medieval period, and it becomes visible as a complex and monumental change in worldview only in the seventeenth century. The period with which this volume is concerned corresponds with many of the most dramatic events in the development of this “new philosophy,” or science. The “natural philosophy” of the classical and medieval periods and the “new philosophy” that emerged in the early modern era often coexisted. At one moment a writer’s cultural reference might be to the older natural philosophy and at the next to the new philosophy, without any obvious concern for what the modern reader might regard as inconsistencies and contradictions.

Awareness of and interest in these new developments in natural philosophy varied among the writers of early modern England. Of course, a writer’s location in time had a great deal to do with how likely he was to know about any aspect of the new philosophy. Writing *Wit and Science* in the mid-sixteenth century, for example, John Redford might have known about the early exploration of the Americas. He was far less likely to know that Copernicus was in the process of publishing, or had just published, his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543), arguing that the earth revolved around the sun. Galileo (1564–1642), whose telescopic observations would provide optical support for Copernicus’ claims, had not yet been born. However, by the time the English poet John Donne wrote in 1611 – “And new Philosophy calls all in doubt, / The Element of fire is quite put out / The Sun is lost, and th’earth, and no mans wit / Can well direct him where to look for it” (*Anatomie of the World*, ll. 205–8) – Copernicus’ claims were known, if not always accepted, by the well educated. Although various developments in the new philosophy are mentioned in the poetry and the prose essays of a few early modern English writers – among them John Donne, George Herbert, and Francis Bacon – few English dramatists show particular interest in either the old or new views of the natural world. Very few stage characters are either natural philosophers or new philosophers. When references to the various branches of science do appear in the drama, they are often satirical or mocking. By and large, earnest seekers for truth, peering through telescopes, bending over magnifying lenses, or experimenting with seething chemical mixtures, did not strike early modern English playwrights as engaging dramatic characters. Instead, satirized characters, like those in Ben Jonson’s *Alchemist*, use the jargon of science and pseudo-science to fool the gullible in attempts to enrich themselves.

This chapter treats various branches of natural philosophy separately, describes the theory and practice of each, and discusses any changes occurring in each area as the new philosophy developed. This separation is artificial. The new philosophers were not generally specialists in the modern sense but rather “Renaissance men,” broadly interested in exploring the natural world. John Dee (1527–1608/9), arguably England’s most famous Elizabethan “scientist,” was a mathematician, alchemist, astrologer, and cryptographer, as well as a practitioner of magic. Like most of his contemporaries, he made little distinction between what moderns see as “genuine” science and the occult. Even earlier, Paracelsus (1493–1541), a Swiss-German physician who explored the possibilities of mixing chemicals to make medicines and who is often credited with founding iatrochemistry or chemical medicine, was an alchemist and astrologer as well as a physician.

Broadly speaking, the “sciences” most in play during the early modern period include astronomy and its somewhat disreputable sister, astrology; alchemy and its developing sibling, chemistry; mathematics; medicine and anatomy; and navigation and geography. The challenges to old beliefs and the new ways of explaining the world that occur in the early modern period were accelerated by the voyages of exploration to Africa, Asia, and the Americas which began during the fifteenth century.

The revelation that the world included whole new continents undreamed of by the ancients opened up a fissure in time as well as space. Compared to earlier writing on travel, the works from the decades after 1492 demonstrate a heightened sense of novelty and possibility – of just how new and different things were able to be. (Daston and Park 1998, 143)

These voyages of discovery began at about the same time as the European invention of movable type (already known in east Asia) and the printing press. Printing became one means of spreading news throughout Europe of ocean voyages, previously unknown lands, and their flora and fauna. Once people realized that the world required them to find a place for territories, cultures, peoples, plants, and animals that Aristotle and his followers had not known, and that were therefore unaccounted for in classical natural philosophy, they slowly became more open to experimentation, investigation, and new ways of thinking that did more than rely on previous authorities. That does not mean, however, that they easily shed their old beliefs.

One of the most compelling examples of early modern willingness to embrace apparently contradictory views is the perception of the world as simultaneously dwindling to its end and making progress. On the one hand, early modern Englishmen saw themselves and their world as lesser versions of the inhabitants of the biblical and the classical “golden” worlds where mankind had stood taller, lived longer, and understood more. Theirs was, by contrast, a world of short life spans, compared to those recorded in the Bible, and diminished intellectual capacity: Renaissance thinkers saw themselves, after all, as only partially recovering the wisdom of earlier times. Their trajectory was downhill as they and their world moved toward the apocalyptic end promised by Christian doctrine. Donne’s *Anatomie of the World* (ll. 106–71) offers a succinct summary of this point of view. Some of the greatest early modern thinkers, Knight writes, “were reluctant to believe that they were innovating rather than recovering lost knowledge familiar to the ancients” (2014, 33). On the other hand, many early moderns demonstrated a growing awareness that people were making discoveries that enlarged the known world, brought valuable new commodities to European shores, and improved the quality of daily life (Daston and Park 1998, 147). Two contemporary terms for this historical period reflect the contradiction: the word “Renaissance” suggests the rebirth of something that had been lost, looking back to a more sophisticated classical civilization; the phrase “early modern,” however, suggests a new beginning, looking forward to the “modern” civilization to come. Progress was not a concept with which the early modern world had much familiarity, but it became harder and harder to resist as one discovery about the natural world led to another.

The natural philosophy of the classical world had been largely theoretical, whereas the new philosophy combined pragmatism with theory. Nearly all of the developing branches of new philosophy had both a theoretical and a practical side. Rather than merely accepting ancient wisdom as the way to interpret what they experienced in their contemporary world, new philosophers looked closely at the physical world and began cautiously to entertain new ideas about it, even if those ideas moved beyond or contradicted the wisdom of authorities such as Aristotle and

Galen. English scientists in particular seemed anxious to test theoretical ideas by putting them into practice. As John Henry puts it, “English natural philosophy was fundamentally empirical in a way that set it apart from other European countries. Although Continental natural philosophers experimented, only English natural philosophers can be said to have been experimentalists” (1992, 182).

Astronomy and Astrology

Cosmology, the first area in which the new philosophy began revising natural philosophy, offers a logical place to begin discussion. Many scholars agree with the view of the primacy of cosmology suggested by Hilary Gatti’s comment that “revolutionary changes in the fundamental scientific theories that dominate a world picture, such as a new cosmology ... lead necessarily to a radical upheaval in the culture and society in which they occur” (1999, 4). At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the heavens seemed to have been more completely mapped than the earth, although that heavenly map would fairly quickly become outdated. In the Ptolemaic universe, a more sophisticated version of Aristotelian cosmology, the sun, the moon, and the five planets visible to the naked eye all revolved around the stationary earth, which was inhabited by mankind. “The cosmos thus spun about the earth, the place where human beings lived, and in just that sense pre-Copernican cosmology was literally *anthropocentric*” (Shapin 1996, 24). In addition, the cosmos was perceived as a closed system, with each planet traveling in its own circular orbit, along with an eighth orb on which were the fixed stars, and an outer layer, the *primum mobile*, or prime mover, which provided movement to the entire system. This rather simple and harmonious picture dominated human understanding of the universe for nearly fifteen hundred years. A comforting model, it made humans the clear focal point of God’s creation. It is this picture which Doctor Faustus, Marlowe’s intellectually ambitious hero, sees when he ascends into the heavens:

Learned *Faustus*
to find the Secrets of Astronomy
.
He views the cloudes, the Planets, and the Starres,
The Tropick, Zones, and quarters of the skye,
From the bright circle of the horned Moone,
Euen to the height of *Primum Mobile*.
(3.Chorus.1–9)

In 1543, Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus* argued that the sun, not the earth, was the center about which the earth and all the other planetary and stellar spheres revolved. His book only gradually elicited widespread reaction. Slowly, however, other astronomers – most notably Tycho Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo – began to test and validate his arguments and astronomical observations. When Galileo turned a newly developed telescope on the heavens, his observations advanced the heliocentric Copernican theory. After Galileo’s visual observations, the heliocentric universe gradually became a cornerstone of the new philosophy. Acceptance of this radically new cosmos was by no means swift or universal. The Church, in particular, was reluctant to see mankind ousted from its central role in God’s creation, arguing that this new theory

directly challenged the biblical account of how the world was made. Nevertheless, as astronomers continued to examine the heavens with increasingly powerful telescopes, there was no going back. By the mid-seventeenth century, the heliocentric cosmos was generally accepted, even by the Church.

Astronomy, the study of the positions and motions of the planets and stars, had long been a respectable intellectual pursuit, included as one of the seven liberal arts in medieval and early modern university curricula. It was a part of the *quadrivium*, along with arithmetic, geometry, and music. The less elevated *trivium* consisted of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The other discipline associated with the heavens, astrology, had no such academic pedigree. Originally conceived as the practical application of astronomy in the world, astrology dealt with how astronomical observations promoted understanding of time, seasons, weather, tides, and navigation. This kind of astrology was called natural astrology. But astrology also concerned the effects of the stars and planets on human affairs and was often used to foretell coming events, to predict outcomes, to explain human personality or character, and even to counsel individuals about what choices to make in their everyday lives. Astrology is still used in this way in the twenty-first century, although such use is often ridiculed or treated as a joke. Many people still know the astrological sign under which they were born and even follow their daily horoscope. A few even use astrological information to assist them in making choices in their daily lives. In the early modern period most people appear to have believed that their lives were influenced and guided by the stars. Astrology concerned with human affairs, called judicial astrology, was widely used to guide decision-making in many areas of human activity, among them prescribing medicine, deciding whether to travel, choosing a marriage partner, or buying property.

Astrologers pictured the heavens somewhat differently from astronomers. They divided the heavens into twelve equal parts, or signs, each ruled by a planet. This system, based on the apparent path of the sun, fit perfectly with the Ptolemaic version of the cosmos. Astrology focused on the positions of the planets and the stars in relation to one another as they moved through the twelve signs of the zodiac and, most importantly, how their relative positions influenced what happened on earth. Although originally based on a geocentric view of the heavens, the claims of judicial astrology “are independent of whether the earth or sun is placed at the centre of the planetary system ... astrology did not disappear after the acceptance of the Copernican system but continued to grow abundantly” (Garin 1983, x). Astrology was an extremely complex and detailed discipline that could be fully understood only by those who had invested years of study. Nevertheless, many early modern citizens had at least a general idea of how the stars might affect their lives and were particularly sensitive to major astronomical aberrations such as meteors, comets, and eclipses, disturbances of the otherwise orderly heavens thought to portend disasters.

While direct references in the drama to the geocentric/heliocentric debates of astronomers are few, stage references to astrology, by contrast, abound. The well-known reference to “star-crossed lovers” in the Prologue to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (l. 6) would have suggested to its early modern audience at the play’s outset that the relationship between the two lovers could not succeed because of the incompatibility of their astrological horoscopes. In John Webster’s tragedy *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–13), the spy Bosola witnesses the father of the Duchess’ newborn baby casting a horoscope for his son (2.3). The horoscope documents the pregnancy and birth that until this moment had been hidden from all but the child’s parents. The paper on which the horoscope is drawn, accidentally dropped by the new father, provides the first bit of evidence that the Duchess’ twin brother uses to destroy her and her family.

The celestial sign under which one was born was seen as particularly important in interpreting one's personality, strengths, and weaknesses. Astrology, or more often characters who misuse it, is sometimes mocked in early modern drama. In *Twelfth Night*, the drunken comic characters Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek decide to dance:

Sir Toby What shall we do else – were we not born under Taurus?
Sir Andrew Taurus? That's sides and heart.
Sir Toby No, sir, it is legs and thighs: let me see thee caper.
(1.3.115–17)

Most early modern playgoers would have had little trouble understanding that both men are incorrect. Taurus, the sign of the bull, governed the head and the throat rather than the sides, heart, or legs. In basic astrology, as in so much else, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are comically inept, but a knowing audience would have understood that Taurus is actually an appropriate sign for both characters, as it governs the throat and is thus particularly suited to heavy drinkers.

In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, a son mocks his father for believing in astrology's influence on human actions and character. The Duke of Gloucester bemoans a disturbed world: "These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. . . . Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide, in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father." (1.2.96–101). Once Gloucester is safely offstage, his villainous son Edmund comments:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, . . . we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; . . . and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. . . . I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. (1.2.109–22)

The playwright's own position on astrological influence cannot be determined here. Gloucester is correct in thinking that all these disturbances in his once orderly world follow recent eclipses, but Edmund is also persuasive in claiming that his nature is not determined by stellar positioning. Perhaps astrology found currency on the Renaissance stage partly because it was controversial. Many believed in it implicitly; others were uncertain about its ability to control or predict human behavior; and at least some, like Edmund, were outright skeptics.

At first conjoined as the theoretical and pragmatic sides of a single discipline, astronomy and astrology grew apart slowly during the early modern period. New instruments allowed astronomers to collect visual and mathematical evidence that disproved some astronomical theories and supported a new understanding of the structure of the universe. Meanwhile, astrology traveled well-worn paths, becoming gradually less and less persuasive as new medical knowledge and understanding of anatomy made the heavens' direct influence on individuals seem less probable.

Alchemy and Chemistry

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, alchemy's place in early modern culture was very different from astronomy's. Never part of the university curriculum and associated instead with hard physical labor, alchemy nevertheless had a lengthy history and textual tradition stretching

back at least to Greek antiquity through the Middle Ages in the centuries when Islamic scholars dominated European intellectual thinking (c.750–1400). As William R. Newman summarizes,

Already in late antiquity ... alchemy occupied a privileged rank among its believers in its claim to alter the deep structure of matter in a way that was purely natural. ... [A]lchemy – at least from the beginning of the Christian era onward – made its central quest the genuine conversion of commonplace materials into entirely distinct substances of much greater value. (2004, 33–4)

Practitioners thought that what they were attempting to do – transform one natural substance into another – was in fact a natural process: “the earth’s warm interior was believed to provide the ideal environment for precious metals to grow and develop from base metals, but the alchemist’s heated chemical vessels provided an alternative location for mineral transformation” (Harkness 2007, 170). By mixing certain natural substances and applying a great deal of heat, man ought to be able to produce transformations similar to those found in nature but in a much shorter time: “A ‘mixed’ discipline of head and hand, of elevated ideas and laborious work, of promise and failure, pursued by practitioners from every rung of the social and intellectual ladders,” alchemy was both learned and manual – “difficult to pin down” (Principe 2013, 178).

Related in something of the same way as astronomy and astrology, alchemy’s sibling, chemistry, would eventually eclipse its older sister.

Before the end of the seventeenth century, the word [“alchemy”] was widely used by early modern writers as a synonym for ‘chymistry,’ a discipline that included iatrochemistry [chemical medicine] and a host of technologies such as the refining of salts and metals, the production of acids, alcoholic libations, and pigments, and finally, the transmutation of base metals into noble ones. Only around the beginning of the eighteenth century did transmutational alchemy come to be strictly segregated from chemistry. (Newman 2004, xiii)

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, despite the truth of Newman’s claims for the range of early modern alchemy, most popular understanding of the art focused on its search for the transformation of base metals such as lead and tin into silver and gold. To bring about this transformation, men sought to create “a natural product that cannot be found in nature without human invention ... the philosophers’ stone ... a sort of second nature, which converts base metals into gold in the same way that nature itself does, only faster” (Newman 2004, 87). Another powerful transformative agent that alchemy’s practitioners hoped to produce by alchemical operations was an elixir to heal all physical ills and prevent aging and death. Although neither the elixir nor the philosophers’ stone was ever developed, alchemists witnessed amazing changes as they heated base metals, mercury, sulfur, and other substances: color, texture, and even taste altered, and new compounds formed. These changes seemed to promise future success and spurred further experiments, even though the raw materials and fuel needed for the alchemical furnaces were extremely expensive. Alchemy acquired a reputation as an art for fools and dupes, for those always chasing a dream that would ultimately impoverish them. The futile search for the philosophers’ stone and the elixir, rather than the range of products produced by alchemical operations, was the aspect of alchemy upon which most writers of the period focused.

Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* explores this territory from a cynical perspective. Three con artists – Subtle, Face, and Doll Common – set up shop in plague-ridden London, hoping to profit from

a series of “clients” who believe in alchemy’s potential to make them rich. Puritan characters, Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias, bring iron fireplace and kitchen implements to be transformed into gold in the alchemical furnace Subtle pretends to have. Sir Epicure Mammon also pays Subtle to produce the philosophers’ stone for him:

This night I’ll change
All that is metal in my house to gold
And early in the morning, will I send
To all the plumbers and the pewterers
And buy their tin and lead up.

(2.1.29–33)

Even more than the philosophers’ stone, however, Sir Epicure wants the elixir which he believes will make him potent and all-powerful:

He that once has the flower of the sun,
The perfect ruby which we call elixir
.
Can confer honour, love, respect, long life;
.
I’ll make an old man of fourscore a child.
.
Restore his years, renew him, like an eagle,
To the fifth age; make him get sons and daughters,
Young giants; as our philosophers have done,
The ancient patriarchs, afore the flood.

(2.1.49–60)

None of the clients realizes his dreams; all lose their money by the play’s end when the three cheats are exposed. Subtle’s alchemy – a swindle from beginning to end – exposes crooks and their victims; but Jonson’s play need not be seen as discouraging a belief in alchemy. Subtle, after all, merely pretends to be an alchemist; his experiments and his furnace are all fakes. Genuine alchemy did exist despite its failure to discover either the elixir or the philosophers’ stone.

Alchemy tempted many in the period, not only those who were easily duped. In the last decade of the sixteenth century, the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II hired John Dee and his associate Edward Kelly to travel to Prague to conduct alchemical experiments, confident that, with proper financial support, they would produce the philosophers’ stone. Queen Elizabeth’s astute advisor and Lord Treasurer, William Cecil, supported alchemical experiments with the Crown’s money.

To close the gap between England and her neighbors, Cecil pursued the possibility of alchemical transmutation on a grand scale. . . . His reasoning was that if England did not possess sufficient gold, silver, and copper to meet its needs, it might nevertheless be possible to alchemically produce the metals using the lead and tin that England had in greater abundance. (Harkness 2007, 170)

In the late seventeenth century, Isaac Newton (1643–1727), renowned mathematician and physicist, was also a practicing alchemist.

Early modern poets found the image of alchemical transformation irresistible. In Sonnet 33, Shakespeare writes of a beautiful morning “kissing with golden face the meadows green, / Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy” (ll. 3–4), while the religious poet George Herbert titled one of his poems in praise of God “The Elixir.” Its final verse offers a new explanation for the power of the “famous stone”:

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for lesse be told.

(ll. 21–4)

John Donne uses alchemical references in several of his lyrics, most notably in “Love’s Alchemy,” where the speaker compares the lover’s anticipation of enjoying a woman’s love with the desire of the alchemist for the philosophers’ stone:

And as no chymique yet th’Elixir got
But glorifies his pregnant pot,
If by the way to him befall
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinall,
So, lovers dreame a rich and long delight,
But get a winter-seeming summers night.

(ll. 7–12)

Donne’s poem cynically emphasizes the disappointing results of the alchemist’s and the lover’s dreams. Yet it also recognizes that some by-products of alchemical experimentation did have value (“some odoriferous thing, or medicinall”). Although alchemists produced neither the philosophers’ stone nor a powerful healing elixir, alchemy’s methodology, the mixing of theoretical and practical experimentation, and its accidental discoveries, formed the backbone of the modern discipline of chemistry:

Much of what alchemists had actually been doing all along – probing the nature and structure of matter and studying and harnessing its transformations – remained as chemistry, even as the alchemists were condemned by ridicule. ... “Alchemy” became the scapegoat for chymistry’s sins, driven from the respectable quarters where a newly purified chemistry could now reside. (Principe 2013, 87)

Although alchemy itself faded away far more completely than did astrology, its methodology, combining theory and experimentation, left a lasting legacy in the world of modern science.

Medicine and Anatomy

Medicine is still both an art and a science, but it is integral nonetheless to understanding the sciences in the early modern world. “As its name implies,” says Harold J. Cook, “physic was one of the branches of the study of nature, or natural philosophy. Physicians had to study

natural philosophy because the purpose of physic was to preserve health and prolong life” (1990, 398). Early modern medicine was closely related to both astrology and alchemy. Astrology provided a guide for the appropriate timing of the administration of medicines and the performance of certain medical routines, such as bleeding and purging. Alchemical techniques were increasingly employed in the search for effective medicines to treat a variety of diseases and conditions. Nowhere in early modern culture were classical theories of natural philosophy more engrained than in beliefs about the human body and its relationship to the world it inhabited.

Following the second-century CE Greek physician Galen (himself influenced by Aristotle, whose works helped form the early modern university curriculum), medical theorists saw mankind as a microcosmic version of the macrocosm. Just as the world was composed of four basic elements, earth, air, fire, and water, so were humans a small replica of the larger creation. In humankind, the four elements appeared as fluids: blood (air), phlegm (water), black bile (earth), and yellow bile (fire). Health resulted from the proper balance of these four fluids in the individual organism, imbalance in illness. In addition, each fluid (or humor) was associated with a particular temperament: sanguine (blood), choleric (yellow bile), melancholic (black bile), and phlegmatic (phlegm). Words derived from these humors – “sanguine,” “melancholic,” “choleric,” “bilious,” or “phlegmatic” – are still available in modern English to describe human personalities. Individuals had somewhat different mixtures of these fluids within them; the humor or humors that predominated in any individual usually explained his or her temperament.

Sometimes the fluids got badly out of balance. This could happen because of factors in a person’s environment or behavior: too much or too little exercise, lack of sleep, unwise eating or drinking. In Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruccio refuses a dish of roasted meat on the grounds of its effect on his and Kate’s health and temperaments:

I expressly am forbid to touch it,
For it engenders cholera, planteth anger,
And better ’twere that both of us did fast,
Since of ourselves ourselves are choleric,
Than feed it with such overroasted flesh.
(4.1.151–5)

Petruccio has a legitimate health reason for refusing to allow Kate roasted meat, but he is also attempting to starve her into submission to his will.

In addition to suggesting changes in a patient’s diet or environment, a physician could also prescribe medicines called “simples” made from natural ingredients such as herbs and other plants. Additional products used as medicines were obtained from animals or even humans (menstrual blood, for example). The physician could also order purging or bloodletting, which got rid not only of blood but also of other excess humors mixed with the blood. Purging (with either a laxative or a vomit) or bleeding (by opening the vein deemed appropriate to the sickness) were generally the strongest measures a physician could order. These bodily interventions would be carried out on a schedule determined by astrological consultation. Each was an attempt to restore the proper balance of humors, with bleeding being the more invasive and serious of the two options. Shakespeare refers metaphorically to humoral imbalance and its remedies quite frequently in the history plays, where the kingdom, a macrocosm, is often portrayed as diseased and subject to treatments analogous to those appropriate

to a human body (microcosm). In *Richard II*, for example, when Bolingbroke challenges Mowbray to armed combat in Act 1, King Richard tries to prevent the fight by suggesting that they purge their anger rather than solving the quarrel by bleeding:

Let's purge this choler without letting blood.
 This we prescribe, though no physician:
 Deep malice makes too deep incision;
 Forget, forgive, conclude, and be agreed;
 Our doctors say this is no time to bleed.

(1.1.153–7)

Note that King Richard claims that the time is not appropriate for drawing blood – suggesting astrological as well as medical support for his view – and also that the less invasive purging will suffice to get rid of the excess choler. In a more serious vein, Henry IV comments on the ill-health of his realm: “Then you perceive the body of our kingdom, / How foul it is, what rank diseases grow, / And with what danger near the heart of it.” (2 *Henry IV* 3.1.37–9), and is reassured by his advisor Warwick that the kingdom is not as ill as the King claims and may be brought back to health “With good advice and little medicine” (l. 42).

Physicians were consulted, at least in theory, only for sickness, not for surgery or for most wounds. Amputations, wound care, dislocated limbs – anything that required physical manipulation of the patient's body – were taken care of by surgeons, whom the better educated physicians regarded as mere workmen, manual laborers. Physicians were theoreticians of medicine, charged with figuring out what was wrong in the mysterious territory inside the human body and finding a way to make it better, sometimes without touching or even without seeing the patient.

Physicians usually treated the humoral human body as a whole: a pain in the head and a stomach ache might be treated in the same way because both symptoms indicated a body's humoral imbalance. This view of the human body remained powerful well into the eighteenth century, but discoveries in anatomy, physiology, and the composition of medicines (iatrochemistry) during the early modern period gradually chipped away at the humoral model.

One important change came in the composition and administration of medicines. A Swiss-German physician improbably named Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493–1541), better known as Paracelsus, introduced minerals and “chemistry” into the field of medicine. “Paracelsus is known above all for his reorientation of alchemy away from the transmutation of metals and toward the pharmaceutical application of alchemical techniques, framing the new discipline of *chymiatría*, or chemical medicine (iatrochemistry)” (Newman 2004, 107). No longer restricted to the “simples” found in the natural world, medicine might now be made from combinations of minerals and salts heated to alter their individual properties. In addition, Paracelsus urged physicians to pay more attention to the area of the body affected and to apply medicine to that part rather than simply treating the whole body by trying to rebalance its fluids. Not surprisingly, this renegade physician, alchemist, astrologer, and occultist – one who also criticized Aristotle, Galen and Avicenna, the unquestioned medical authorities during the Middle Ages – at first did not find much support in the medical community. Nevertheless, some of his theories about chemical medicine gradually crept into the practices of even devout Galenists. Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* suggests that even the nonmedical culture was aware of disagreements among

physicians over appropriate medicines and procedures. The play's heroine, Helena, despite being a woman with no medical training, cures the king's nearly fatal fistula. Once the cure is accomplished, the king's courtiers discuss the "miracle":

Paroles Why 'tis the rarest argument of wonder that hath
 Shot out in our latter times.
Bertram And so 'tis.
Lafeu To be relinquished of the artists –
Paroles So I say – both of Galen and Paracelsus.
Lafeu Of all the learned and authentic Fellows –
Paroles Right so I say.
Lafeu That gave him out incurable –
Paroles Why, there 'tis, so say I too.
Lafeu Not to be helped.

(2.3.6–15)

For the king to be cured by a woman, after the Fellows of the Royal College – mostly Galenists – and the Paracelsians had given up hope of a cure, was indeed something to gossip about. The play suggests the low regard in which physicians were held because of their failure to deal successfully with many of the period's physical ailments. By the late sixteenth century, some English physicians had begun to integrate "chemical" medicines into their pharmacopeia. Sir Epicure Mammon, Jonson's elixir-seeking dupe, expresses only admiration for Paracelsus and scorn for Galen. Defending the fraud Subtle, he declares him "a rare physician, ... / An excellent Paracelsian, ... [who] has done / Strange cures with mineral physic. ... He will not hear a word of Galen, / or his tedious recipes" (*Alchemist*. 3.2.243–7). The tide turned away from Galen in England: in 1611, King James I chose as his chief royal physician Théodore de Mayerne (1573–1655), a Paracelsian physician who went on to wield great influence over the practice of medicine in Stuart England.

Another development which slowly influenced the perception and treatment of human bodies was the increasing interest in and availability of human anatomies. Anatomical studies allowed physicians and medical students to peer inside human corpses, territory long hidden from view. Classical anatomists apparently made most of their diagrams of the interior of the human body on the basis of dissections of animals. Descriptions of the human body offered by Aristotle and Galen thus contained many inaccuracies. In the early modern period, access to the corpses of criminals for anatomical dissection, although very limited, was increasingly permitted. Dissections of human corpses began in Italy at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, although they still required a papal indulgence (Nunn 2005, 5). In these early dissections, however, the point seemed mostly to demonstrate the physiology handed down from Aristotle or Avicenna (a Persian philosopher and physician, 980–1037), whose texts were read aloud by the presiding professor of medicine while a surgeon cut the corpse and another participant "performed the third office of indicating with a wand the precise parts of the body to which the professor's text referred" (Wilson 1987, 64). In the mid-fifteenth century, the Italian anatomist Vesalius (1514–64) changed this ritualized form of public anatomy by both making the incisions and pointing out the internal organs himself. His lectures were sometimes spontaneous, based on what he was actually seeing in the body before him rather than on printed medical texts. His anatomy text *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), filled with detailed anatomical drawings, eventually became the standard for anatomists.

In England, human anatomies were officially permitted first in 1540, when Henry VIII, in the charter of the Barber Surgeons College, gave the surgeons four criminal bodies a year for public anatomy lectures. In 1565, Elizabeth I granted the Royal College of Physicians of London four criminal corpses annually for public anatomies before members of the College and qualified guests (Nunn 2005, 4). The relevance of these anatomies to science in England is perhaps best exemplified by the career of William Harvey, the physician who first demonstrated the circulation of blood. As a lecturer in anatomy at the Royal College of Physicians beginning in 1616, Harvey followed the lead of Vesalius by lecturing and dissecting simultaneously. For his anatomy lectures he prepared lecture notes which he amended and added to as he learned more from each anatomy he conducted. Luke Wilson reads the text as “an accumulation of data and an induction of universals from particulars. . . . This physiological orientation is what distinguishes Harvey’s anatomy historically, and to it we owe his later discovery of the circulation of the blood” (1987, 75). Once again, pragmatic investigation emended classical theory: that is, Harvey was moving away from the older theory and labor hierarchy that kept the medical professor and the anatomist separate and thus prevented them from learning anything not in their authoritative texts. Harvey’s lecture notes, however, have on their title-page an epigram from Aristotle: “Anatomy is a part of philosophy, of medicine and of mechanics.” Despite new methods and discoveries, as the presence of the classical epigram suggests, classical authors continued to have a major influence on early modern scientists.

Following the introduction of human anatomies to London, a wave of interest in anatomies appeared in the work of English writers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Robert Burton (1577–1640), for example, entitled his monumental work on melancholia *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton uses the metaphor of anatomy throughout this work that minutely dissects every aspect of his subject. John Donne’s poem *An Anatomie of the World*, already mentioned, extends the metaphor of the anatomy throughout its considerable length, concluding with lines that indicate – as in the usual three-day limit of actual anatomies – that his examination must now end because the corpse has become too rank:

But as in cutting up a man that’s dead,
The body will not last out, to have read
On every part, and therefore men direct
Their speech to parts, that are of most effect;
So the worlds carcasse would not last, if I
Were punctuall in this Anatomy.

(ll. 435–40)

King Lear, in the depths of his madness on the heath, cries out against his treacherous daughters and orders: “Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?” (3.6.70–2). Among the many other references to anatomies in the early modern drama, the culminating scene in John Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (c.1630) stands out for its visual presentation of viscera. Having murdered his sister and lover Annabella in full view of the audience in the preceding scene, Giovanni bursts upon the birthday celebration of Annabella’s husband brandishing her heart upon his sword, a presentation as graphic and physical as the display of organs in an anatomical lecture for the College of Surgeons or Physicians. As these references suggest, certain aspects of the new philosophy’s developments in the areas of medicine and anatomy caught the attention of dramatists and poets, who gave them vivid graphic or verbal presentation in their work.

Mathematics

Perhaps the least dramatized of all the areas surveyed here is mathematics. Early modern university curricula took up mathematics as two subjects in the *quadrivium*, arithmetic and geometry (Taylor 1954).

In sixteenth-century England, the basic mathematics was arithmetic and the basic vernacular text was Robert Recorde's 1542 *The Grounde of Artes*. Although Recorde went on to publish other books on geometry and astronomy, they did not have the success of his arithmetic book. Geometry had to wait until 1570 for a successful text, Henry Billingsley's English translation of Euclid's *Elements*, with a lengthy preface by John Dee on geometry's many and varied uses. Once again, a classical text served as the springboard for a somewhat more pragmatic, new philosophical approach to the subject. Billingsley and Dee "put theory and practice side by side[;] mathematics and its applications appeared to be inseparable partners" (Harkness 2007, 102). Among the many areas in which mathematics was important were navigation, cartography, battle-planning, gunnery, astrology, almanac-making, and instrumentation. While the number of people with mathematical training expanded greatly in the early modern period, the form of mathematics that they practiced was, for the most part, not a pure, theoretical mathematics, but rather a practical mathematics that might further their mastery of such other activities as navigation or gunnery.

Nevertheless, early modern Britain was not without mathematical theorists. John Napier (1550–1617), a Scotsman, is credited with a number of mathematical contributions, the most notable the invention of logarithms that greatly simplified mathematical operations with large numbers. Isaac Newton, along with Gottfried Leibniz, invented basic calculus, the mathematical theory of change. Both these theoretical breakthroughs enabled advances in other sciences such as physics and astronomy.

As the centerpiece of his unfinished utopian essay, *The New Atlantis*, Francis Bacon (1561–1626) described Salomon's House, "dedicated to the study of the Works and Creatures of God" (1996, 471). Among several "houses" contained within Salomon's House is "a mathematical house, where are represented all instruments, as well of geometry as astronomy, exquisitely made" (486). Bacon regards mathematics as serving other scientific endeavors, one part of an attempt to learn the secrets of the natural world.

Bacon places within his house of practical science a variety of physical terrains: deep caves, high towers, parks, and lakes where the members of Salomon's House can conduct experiments of all sorts, creating new medicines and new species of plants and animals, investigating everything from new perfumes to new ways of generating heat, light, and sound. Bacon's utopian vision of what man can accomplish as he devotes himself to exploring the natural world is incredibly diverse. Empiricism holds his vision together. All the inquiry is based on sensory observation and designed to produce practical results to benefit mankind. Bacon – who has been called "the face put on Elizabethan science" (Harkness 2007, 215) – is certainly the best-known figure associated with science to emerge in England before the mid-seventeenth century. Yet his impact, made possible partly by his political connections and social standing, came more from his understanding of how to organize and publicize scientific endeavors than from any major scientific discoveries of his own. He was not a Copernicus, Galileo, Harvey, or Napier. His genius was to articulate clearly a method of approaching scientific inquiry, a method that moved from hypothesis through examination of evidence to a tentative conclusion. His imaginary House of Salomon, created to foster this approach, became the inspiration for England's Royal Society (founded in 1660), an institution whose members were bound by an interest in scientific inquiry.

A little-studied allegorical drama, *Technogamia or The Marriages of the Arts*, written by Barten Holyday and performed at Oxford in 1618 and published in the same year, serves to conclude this discussion of natural philosophy, new philosophy, and science in the period and on the stage. In comparison to the earlier, equally allegorical, *Wit and Science*, Holyday's play suggests how much has changed in the seven decades that separate the two plays. *Technogamia* brings together a number of the subjects discussed above, much as the various branches of science were entwined in the period. Among the large cast of characters, for example, are all seven "arts" found in the *quadrivium* and *trivium* – Astrologia, Arithmetica, Geometres, Musica, Logicus, Grammaticus, and Rhetorica. Acting as servants to other characters are the four humors, Cholor, Sanguis (who appropriately serves Medicus, the physician), Melancholico, and Phlegmatico. Polites, "a Magistrate," and Astronomia's mother, Physica, who represents the natural world (the Greek word *physis* translates into English as "nature") preside over the play's society. The heroine, Astronomia, is wooed by both Geographus and Geometres. She is the central focus of the play, finally choosing Geographus as her spouse. Astrologia and Magus, a married couple, support Astronomia's rival suitor, Geometres. Frustrated that their candidate, who pays them for their assistance, is not succeeding in his courtship, Magus instructs Medicus to prepare a poison, and Astrologia slips it into a drink she gives Astronomia during a formal banquet. When Astronomia sickens, inquiries are made, and Medicus confesses to preparing a poison as ordered by Magus. Although Astronomia becomes very ill, she recovers and goes on to wed Geographus. Other marriages – between Geometres and Arithmetica, Historia and Poeta, Grammaticus and Rhetorica, and Musica and Melancholico – are arranged by Polites and enthusiastically accepted by the couples themselves. Medicus is pardoned by Polites for his part in the poisoning and is readmitted to the "Common-wealth of the Sciences" (Holyday [1618] 1997, 133) with a caution to behave better in the future. Polites orders Astrologia and Magus to leave the society, the only characters rejected by the Arts and their friends.

The play offers a fascinating glimpse of one man's understanding of the relationships among disciplines: Astronomia, the all-desirable heroine, triumphantly weds the explorer and traveler Geographus. Thus "the revelation of the globe to and by the navigators brought renewed value to astronomy, which flourished in the wake of practical concerns before becoming an exemplary exact science" (Knight 2014, 60). Polites persuades Astronomia's mother, Physica, to accept the match only on the condition that Phantastes (imagination), Geographus' servant, be dismissed, suggesting that the fantastic beasts and monsters that were a part of most travel narratives in the period are to be banned from geographical literature in the future. (Phantastes finds a new position serving Musica and Melancholico.) Astrologia and Magus, inseparably married, are banished from the bridal feast and the commonwealth, much as magic and astrology became increasingly suspect as the scientific revolution unfolded. Medicus remains in the society on the condition that he end his relationship with magic and astrology. Polites remarks with some satisfaction on the "healing" of the community, using the microcosm/macrocosm analogy: "Thus, as in a natural bodie, the first way to health, is by remoouing all more dangerous corruptions; and the second, by reducing the humours to a compos'd temperature: the first is already perform'd, and now it remains that wee temper our selues" (Holyday [1618] 1997, 138). Holyday sprinkles his text with references not only to the sciences but also to men, like Copernicus and Galileo, who had thus far contributed to the new philosophy. Holyday clearly meant to demonstrate his mastery of current knowledge about new philosophy, much as Bacon a decade later would consolidate all branches of scientific inquiry into his utopian community. While more developments were to come, the beginning of what would be called the Scientific Revolution was evident to these writers by the early seventeenth century.

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13

Magic and Witchcraft

Deborah Willis

In 1563, early in the reign of Elizabeth I and a year before the births of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, Parliament passed the Act against Conjurations, Enchantments and Witchcrafts, making it a crime punishable by death to conjure evil spirits for any purpose or to use any “witchcraft, enchantment, charm, or sorcery” to kill another person. Although not the first secular antiwitchcraft legislation to be enacted in England, it was the first to stay on the books for more than five years and to be enforced actively through the courts.¹ A few years later, in 1567, John Brayne (future partner of James Burbage) oversaw the construction of what now appears to be the first public playhouse in London, the Red Lion. In the decades that followed, as more playhouses were built and play companies formed, as the theater developed into a potent and influential cultural institution, prosecutions of witches and other magical practitioners also gathered force.

It is not surprising, then, that the theater would find in witchcraft and magic a prime source of material. By the 1580s and 1590s, witchcraft was a hot-button issue, the topic of an increasing number of religious tracts, philosophical treatises, and popular pamphlets as well as plays. In both the courtroom and the theater, magical practitioners were figures of fascination and danger, put on display to be probed and tested, at the center of conflicting beliefs, perceptions, and debates. Both the law’s and the theater’s treatment of these figures spoke to a new anxiety about a wide variety of magical practices that had been tolerated or ignored in preceding decades and centuries. While always subject to some sort of regulation, such practices seemed increasingly widespread and newly dangerous to many observers, exerting a powerful hold on the people, requiring a more vigorous response.²

Defining Witchcraft in Context

But what, more precisely, was meant by the term “witchcraft” and others mentioned in the Act? The meanings we give to these terms and the associations we bring to them today are not necessarily those of Elizabethan or Jacobean England. The language of the Act itself contains a certain

profusion of terms that overlap though are not quite identical. "Witchcraft" could be an umbrella term, used to refer to all manner of magical practices, including the use of conjuration, spirits, image magic, or charms and spells, and a "witch" could be either male or female, good or bad, book-learned or illiterate, depending on context. "Magic" was an even broader term, inclusive of witchcraft, sorcery, or necromancy, but also such occult practices as alchemy and astrology. Nevertheless, the terms were frequently used in narrower senses, and the witch and the magician tended to be differentiated by gender, class, motive, and method. Witches were typically women, usually old, poor and uneducated, who used familiars or "imps" – spirits who appeared to them in the form of small animals – to cause sickness, death, or other misfortunes to their neighbors. They practiced *maleficium* – harmful magic. The magician, on the other hand, was more likely to be male, an educated "middling sort" who gained his skills from books. He too might use magic to harm or to kill, but more often he used it to gain wealth, power, or knowledge. Typically, he raised spirits – angels, demons, spirits of the dead – by means of a magic circle and complicated incantations and rituals. He might also make astrological predictions or use other forms of divination. The magician's less educated counterparts at the village level were the cunning folk (known also as wizards, white witches, or merely witches) who used magical techniques to cure sickness, tell fortunes, find lost treasure, achieve success in love, or protect from bad luck and witchcraft.

Not all the magician's practices were equally forbidden. The Act prohibited only the raising of "evil" spirits, leaving an opening for those who wanted to contact spirits they considered more benign. Charms and amulets, it was assumed, drew upon occult forces but did not necessarily require spirits. Fundamental beliefs of astrology were widely accepted, though some aspects of it were controversial. The Act gave more weight to the ends of magic than to its methods. Only when witchcraft or other magical practices resulted in death were they punishable by execution. Causing sickness or injury merely led to a year's imprisonment and quarterly appearances in the pillory (at least for a first offense). Similarly, imprisonment was the punishment for using magic to kill livestock, find stolen treasure, or procure unlawful love.

One of the first persons questioned after the Act went into effect was John Walsh of Dorsetshire, servant to a Catholic priest.³ Though no records have survived to tell us whether Walsh was turned over to the secular authorities for trial after his examination in the church courts, he confessed that he used a "book of circles" and a familiar spirit to find stolen goods – a deed punishable by a year's imprisonment, according to the Act. The familiar had stayed with Walsh for five years, until the book of circles was taken from him by a constable, appearing to him variously as a pigeon, a dog, and a man with cloven feet. In exchange for its help, Walsh had to give him "living things," and upon first receiving the spirit from his master, he had been required to give it a drop of his own blood. Yet Walsh also emphatically denied using the spirit – or any other form of magic – "to harm man, woman, or child," a statement he was willing to affirm by solemn oath.

John Walsh's case was unusual in that he was male, and it is tempting, though speculative, to conclude that the absence of records means leniency was shown to Walsh and that his case was not pursued further. Though Walsh's relationship with his familiar resembles descriptions in many confessions by accused women, his examiners may have been willing to accept that Walsh had not used his spirit to cause sickness or death. By and large, it was the female witch and not the male magician who was prosecuted under the Act. It was the homicidal use of witchcraft, rather than the conjuration of evil spirits or the less overtly harmful types of magic, that moved villagers to inform against witches and authorities to prosecute them. Nearly all known trials in

England focused on acts of *maleficium* believed to end in human death, and most of those executed for such acts were women.

The deadly legacy of the witch trials has led many historians studying witchcraft and magic in the early modern period to focus on the prosecution process and to attempt to identify causes of the trials. Skeptics about supernatural agency or occult power, they have typically seen prosecution as persecution, and “witch hunt” has become a term for the scapegoating of innocent victims. Historians in the early to mid-twentieth century, who usually focused broadly on European witch-hunting, saw the prosecutions as primarily a top-down affair, the work of elites who imposed their beliefs on the common people. By the 1970s, however, Alan MacFarlane (1970) and Keith Thomas (1971) showed conclusively that authorities in England were responsive to popular fears of the witch’s *maleficium*, and villagers often actively accused witches, pressuring authorities to take action. In their analysis, the impetus for witch-hunting came primarily “from below” and was to be explained by social and psychological factors, catalyzed by economic tensions. Other historians have built on their work, emphasizing the interplay of “above” and “below” and of a variety of social, political, and religious factors, while feminist historians have focused especially on the role of gender in the hunts, asking why so many accused witches were women and finding at least partial answers in patriarchal codes, misogynist attitudes, and/or fantasies about mothers and the maternal body (Willis 1995; Purkiss 1996; Sharpe 1996). Historians less interested in speculating about causes have investigated mentalities and representational systems (Clark 1997; Gaskill 2000; Gibson 1999) or turned to local studies (R. Poole 2002).

Whatever their approach, most historians would agree that the typical witchcraft case in England followed a fairly predictable trajectory. Many cases began with a quarrel between neighbors, after which the winner of the quarrel fell victim to certain types of misfortune: the milk went sour, the butter wouldn’t turn, hogs died “strangely,” a child fell sick, a wife or husband died. The loser of the quarrel was suspected of using magic to retaliate for a perceived injury or slight, especially after several such incidents. Before the Act of 1563, neighbors fearful of a witch might turn to one of the local cunning folk for protection, procuring some sort of countermagic to undo the witch’s *maleficium*. But afterwards, they could also appeal to the local justice of the peace to open an inquiry. Depending on his findings, a trial would be held. The accused woman was on her way to imprisonment, execution, or sometimes acquittal.

In England, conviction was by no means automatic and prosecutions were relatively infrequent (with the exception of the county of Essex). Most cases focused on individual witches or small groups, unlike some European countries where large numbers of accused witches were charged at the same time and the supposedly eyewitness testimony of other witches could be enough to convict (Macfarlane 1970; Levack 2006). Judges and juries were well aware that such things as sickness or death might have natural causes and that the relation between a quarrel and subsequent misfortune might be purely coincidental. They had to adjudicate between competing narratives: a woman’s fate was determined by who could construct the most compelling story out of largely circumstantial evidence (Dolan 1995; Darr 2011). Sightings of small animals, first in the presence of the accused woman, then on the bewitched person’s land, helped to support the idea that witchcraft was the cause of a particular illness or death: familiar spirits, or “imps” as they were often called, who carried out the witch’s requests, were widely believed to appear in animal form. Once an investigation was underway, the accused woman’s body might be examined for the devil’s mark, or “teat” – a place on her body where the familiar would suck blood. Any unusual fleshy protuberance, especially one in a private place, provided further

confirmation of the charge of witchcraft. But the most crucial piece of evidence was generally the witch's confession – the story told by the accused woman herself. In a great many investigations, women confessed to keeping familiar spirits, often after receiving them from other witches, just as John Walsh had received his from his master. The spirit might live with a woman for many years, being fed milk or beer along with the witch's blood, and being kept warm inside a wooden box or wool-lined pots. In exchange for this quasi-maternal care, the spirit carried out the witch's requests to bring sickness or death to the homes of her enemies.

It is now widely accepted that beliefs about witchcraft in the early modern period made it easy to assume that witches were likely to be women (Rowlands 2013). Witchcraft discourse often constructed the witch as a kind of antimother or antihousewife and encoded fantasies about the maternal body; many accusations of witchcraft emerged from conflicts in the domestic sphere and were associated with activities culturally defined as “women's work” – food production, household management, the birth process, childcare, care of the sick (Willis 1995; Purkiss 1996). In religious tracts, women were the weaker sex, less able to govern their desires and, like Eve, more susceptible to the devil's temptations. Yet the crime itself was defined in gender-neutral terms and men were sometimes convicted. Although the percentage of male witches in England was relatively small, perhaps no more than 5 percent, on the Continent men were accused in 20–30 percent of cases, and in some countries, such as Iceland and Russia, men were in the majority (Rowlands 2009).

Some of the most interesting recent work on witchcraft and gender has taken up the question of the male witch. What made some men vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft? How was gender negotiated in specific cases? Was a charge of witchcraft associated with “effeminacy” or some other violation of male gender norms? Theories of women as the “weaker” sex did not mean that men were never weak, only that fewer of them were. Thus, according to Laura Apps and Andrew Gow, it was relatively easy for demonologists to accommodate male witches in their conceptualizations by feminizing them, a reminder that categories of “male” and “female” were “not so rigidly polarized as to prevent ‘leakage’ across the gender boundary” (2003, 136). Others have argued that there were “male” types of witchcraft just as there were “female” types and that male witches were especially likely to come from certain occupations, such as as herding or animal healing (Rowlands 2009; Kent 2013). In areas where coven meetings or sabbaths were a major component of testimony against witches, men were assumed to take on certain gender-specific roles, such as musician, clerk, or officer. Dr. Fian, for example, one of the North Berwick witches described in the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*, confessed to being “clerk to all those that were in subjection to the devil's service” at their general meetings, keeping records of their oaths and writing down “such matters as the devil ... pleased to command him” (Normand and Roberts 2000). In some areas, male vagrants or “rogues” associated with sexual misconduct such as bestiality or incest made up a subgroup of male witches, as did priests who broke their vows of celibacy (Rowlands 2009, 88–9).

This fruitful line of inquiry has challenged older views that assumed men were accused largely because of their relationship with a female “prime suspect” or because large-scale panics caused normal constraints to break down, placing everyone in a local community under suspicion (Apps and Gow 2003, 43). Yet marital and family ties should not be ignored as a factor in some witchcraft cases, pointing to another important new focus of research: the witch-family. In England, mothers and daughters were often accused together and some trials ended in the conviction of mother, father, and child (the Samuels family, known as the “Witches of Warboys”; the family of Arthur Bill, featured in the pamphlet *The Witches of Northamptonshire*; the Trevisard family in

Devon). The notorious trials of Lancashire witches in 1612 featured two large extended families. Many pamphlets about witchcraft published in the years between 1590 and 1620 gave prominence to family relationships among witches, foregrounding themes of intergenerational influence, perverse nurture, family order, and class difference. Surprisingly, what made the witch-family a threat was precisely what would have been considered “good order” in other families: dutiful children obeyed witch-parents who took pains to give them a good education and initiate them into the family business. This was how witchcraft spread: the family could be a major conduit for its transmission across communities and generations. Demonologists such as Nicholas Remy (a magistrate in the nearby Duchy of Lorraine) also gave emphasis to the dangerous role played by the family – a danger so extreme as to warrant the execution of small children along with their witch-parents to prevent further attacks upon the community (Willis 2013).

Beliefs about witch-families offered a variation that stood between stereotypes of the individual witch, often a solitary old hag, and Satan-worshippers who convened in large-scale mass meetings for a witches’ sabbath. The latter was seldom mentioned in English trials, though it was common in Scotland and the most active witch-hunting regions of Europe. As elaborated in the works of many European demonologists, such as Kramer and Sprenger’s *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) or Guazzo’s *Compendium Maleficarum* (1608), witches typically made pacts with the devil, belonged to covens, flew to sabbaths literally or in dreams, and had sexual relations with demons. They were part of a vast conspiracy. The English witch, on the other hand, only sometimes confessed to making a pact, and sabbaths or lurid sexual activities were almost never mentioned by accused women or her village-level accusers. Instead, familiars settled into long-term domestic relationships with their witch, and though accused women frequently reported receiving familiars from family members or informal networks of friends, they held no regular meetings nor claimed the power to fly. In many confessions the familiar was not clearly linked to the devil or even regarded as a demon, more closely resembling mischief-making fairies or a literal pet. The so-called devil’s mark was not necessarily the sign of a pact with the devil, but a teat by which the witch feeds her imp in a simple exchange of services.

Just how sharp a division can be made between “English” and “Continental” belief, however, is a matter of debate. Robin Briggs, for example, has argued that downplaying the role of the demonic pact in English trials is misleading and that “the animal familiars or imps which appear in almost every well-documented case quite clearly performed the role of the devil. The witch made an effective compact with him” (1996, 29). It is true that Joan Cunny, for example, examined in 1589, reported that another witch, Mother Humphreys, had instructed her to make a circle on the ground and pray to Satan, “the chief of devils,” to send spirits to her. When they appear, she promises them her soul in exchange for their services (Rosen 1991, 183). But in other confessions, accused women make no reference to a pact or even to the devil, describing more informal arrangements in which spirits perform services merely to get the witch’s quasi-maternal care. Another example, which at first glance seems to support Briggs’s claim, in fact more strongly suggests the coexistence of two related, yet distinct threads in popular belief: when the devil appeared to Joan Prentice in the likeness of a ferret and demanded her soul, she refused to give it to him (Rosen 1991, 187). Instead, she allowed him occasionally to suck blood from her cheek. In exchange, the ferret spoiled the drink of a neighbor’s wife, and later killed a neighbor’s child (though Joan had asked him only “to nip it but a little”). Familiars, this confession suggests, might carry out the witch’s *maleficium* without requiring an oath of allegiance or their soul.

In contrast to Briggs, some historians have argued that English beliefs about familiars suggest the possibility of a native tradition of nondemonic spirit-magic or shamanism, or that familiars

were closely related to fairies (Davies 2003; Wilby 2006; Purkiss 2000, 152–7). Perhaps more likely, they may have entered village-level belief “from above” – the trickle-down effect of learned magical practices that relied on the conjuration of spirits (Kieckhefer 1990). Whatever their origins, beliefs about familiars – or indeed about any kind of spirit-magic – were increasingly demonized by post-Reformation religious authorities. By the mid-seventeenth century the demonic pact had become a well-established feature of English belief.

All the same, even when the pact was absent, confessions were narratives of temptation and fall and often involved surrender to a spirit’s aggression. Elizabeth Bennett, one of the women accused in the St. Osyth trials, confessed to becoming a witch after she called upon the name of God and “prayed devoutly” to get two spirits to stop pestering her. They had been causing her mischief for several months. For a while her prayers succeeded and they left her alone. But after a series of increasingly serious quarrels with her neighbor, William Byatt, who called her names and abused her cattle, she gave in to the temptation to take revenge, asking the spirits “to plague Byatt’s beasts to death.” They did so, but went even further and killed Byatt’s wife. Bennett denied responsibility for this death, saying the spirits did it only “to win credit” with her, after telling her they knew that “Byatt and his wife [had] wronged [her] greatly.” Suffering further harassment, Bennett finally asked one of the spirits to go after Byatt himself. After his death, she gave the spirit “a reward of milk” (Rosen 1991, 122).

Although Bennett’s confession does not make it explicit, the underlying story of temptation and fall is evident. The spirits have initiated contact with Bennett and pressured, coaxed, and seduced her into committing an intentional act of murder. Once she actively calls them to do her bidding, she has crossed the line separating victim from perpetrator. Many Protestant clergymen were anxious to go one step further by making the familiar’s link to the devil utterly clear. In sermons, treatises, and prefaces to witchcraft pamphlets, clerics such as George Gifford and William Perkins argued that however inoffensive these animal spirits might seem, with their wool pots, endearing names, and shows of pity for human suffering, they were all merely deceptive disguises of none other than Satan himself. If he takes on the form of “paltrier vermin,” suggests Gifford, “it is even of subtiltie to cover and hide his mightie tyrannie and power” and entrap old women and ignorant people ([1593] 1931, sig. C2). Moreover, the cunning folk who used magical practices and seemed to do good were even more dangerous than the witch guilty of *maleficium*. The common people knew enough to avoid the harmful witch. Yet the action of the devil could also be detected in the white witch’s charms and magical cures, and those who thought they were conjuring angels or “good” spirits were deceived. Similarly, the elite magician was a danger. James IV and I in his *Daemonologie* condemned all astrology (except the kind used to predict weather) and all forms of conjuration, concluding that magicians and necromancers deserved punishments at least as severe as witches. In fact, echoing Gifford, he believes they are worse than witches, for “their error proceeds of the greater knowledge, and so draws nerer to the sin against the holy Ghost.” Moreover, he that “consults, enquires, entertaines, and oversees” the magician was as guilty as the magician himself (Normand and Roberts 2000).

Yet many in early modern England remained unconvinced, and accepted such practices as astrology, divination, and conjuration of angelic spirits. Well-respected men such as the mathematician, navigator, and philosopher John Dee or the physician and Anglican clergyman Richard Napier employed magical practices at times and believed doing so to be consistent with the highest Christian principles (French 1987; Macdonald 1981). Others felt that no wrong was done by raising demons with a “binding spell.” The notion of the pact, alive in English intellectual circles if not always so among villagers, in fact helped some magical practitioners defend

their conjuring; as long as demons were under their control and no bargain was made, they were not doing the devil's work. And even after the antiwitchcraft laws were toughened in 1604 (by, among other things, making it a crime punishable by death not only to conjure an evil spirit but also to "consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil and wicked spirit to or for any intent or purpose"), prosecutions remained almost entirely focused on the witch who practiced *maleficium*.

Still others viewed many magical beliefs with skepticism. Reginald Scot thought witches' confessions should be understood as the delusions of old women. Demonic possession might be madness or fraud. George Gifford was highly critical of evidence used in witch trials and thought most accusations the "devil's testimony." William Perkins, more generally supportive of the trials, nevertheless thought some witch-identifying techniques were suspect and urged caution in assessing evidence. Educated gentlemen viewed many beliefs of villagers as ignorant superstitions. Fortune-tellers and conjurers were frequently suspected of being con artists.

Witchcraft Onstage

Where, then, does the theater fit in this complex, shifting landscape of debates about magical practices? As Barbara Traister (1984, 33) has shown, from 1570 to 1620, magicians appear as major characters or as significant minor ones in over two dozen plays. Witches appear in at least a dozen others. References to magical practices or metaphorical allusions occur widely in plays throughout the period even when the human figures of magician or witch are absent. Playwrights were well aware that theatrical practices resembled that of the magician, and drew analogies between the stage and the magic circle, spirits and actors, conjuration and the play company's craft. At the same time, however, playwrights sought to draw distinctions. The aims of theater were to entertain and edify, by presenting fictions, not lies. As Sir Philip Sidney put it in his *Apology for Poetry*, "the poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true, what he writeth ... What child is there that, coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes?" ([1595] 1973, 124). The magician's methods were far more suspect, his aims less lofty and disinterested.

There was, of course, great diversity in playwrights' treatment of magical themes and characters. They were by no means in agreement on questions of magic's moral or spiritual status. Yet some generalizations seem reasonably safe to make. Most stage plays did not participate in sweeping Calvinist denunciations of the cunning folk or white magicians. Magicians could appear as benevolent and virtuous figures, their practices consistent with the highest spiritual and ethical principles. In many plays, astrology, charms, or even conjuration are used for constructive or at least neutral ends. Few, if any, seem designed to promote witch trials or to foster fear of the witch.

At the same time, however, the most probing and sophisticated early modern playwrights do not by any means adopt an uncritical or romanticizing stance when they treat the subject of magic in depth. In most of these plays, the magician appears as a complex, humanly sympathetic, yet morally problematic figure. Prospero in *The Tempest*, having lost his dukedom by becoming "rapt in secret studies," is a man walking a moral tightrope, and the price of his redemption is the abjuration of his magic art. Jonson's Doctor Subtle in *The Alchemist* is a wily con artist whose manipulation of the spurious promises of alchemy works to expose greed, gullibility, and self-delusion in the social world around him. Dr. Faustus' expansive humanist aspirations, but also his egotism, leave him open to the devil's entrapment.

Moreover, major characters who “consult with witches” or seek out other magical practitioners typically do so out of criminal desire. Macbeth goes to the Weird sisters in search of “security” after becoming a usurper and serial killer. Alice and Mosby in *Arden of Feversham* plot to murder Alice’s husband by engaging the services of a cunning man. In Webster’s *The White Devil*, Bracciano consults a conjurer in his quest to murder his wife and marry Vittoria Corombona. Corrupt suitors seek out witches for love potions or to render rivals impotent in Middleton’s *The Witch* and Marston’s *Sophonisba* (Corbin and Sedge 1986).

In contrast, then, to the law courts, which primarily targeted the female witch, the early modern theater tended to focus on male characters when it took up the practices prohibited by the antiwitchcraft statute, targeting male desire instead of women’s unruly nature. While the witch featured in pamphlet literature was most likely to be motivated by anger and revenge, in stage plays magical practitioners and those who consulted them typically sought shortcuts to power, status, wealth, and/or sexual conquest. To the extent that these plays were understood as cautionary tales, they could be said to supplement the antiwitchcraft laws, performing a regulatory function. If the courts lacked the resources to enforce the laws against conjuring or consulting evil spirits, the theater could at least warn of the tragic outcomes for those who did so. But plays such as *Doctor Faustus* and *Macbeth* produced more complex and ambiguous effects, offering a rich meditation on the psychology of temptation, exploring paradoxes of the will and testing the limits of agency. Faustus and Macbeth are doomed by a complex intersection of internal and external forces, in which their own desires and propensity for wishful thinking combine with cultural influences and human relationships to make them acutely vulnerable to “supernatural soliciting” and the manipulations of the devil or his agents. Ultimately, they are plays that raise more questions than they answer, punishing the apparent reprobate yet also arousing sympathy for him, along with uneasiness about the mysteries of the divine plan.

Unlike magicians, witches on the early modern stage seldom were given such subtle or extensive treatment. Nor do stage witches resemble their offstage counterparts very closely. While magicians such as Prospero or Faustus employ practices that can be found in the books of real-life magicians and are given depth and complexity, the stage witch is often a broad stereotype with monstrous traits and fantastical powers, a hybrid of medieval romance, classical tradition, the Bible, and Continental demonological treatises, as well as of pamphlets or other documents about village-level witches. Middleton’s Hecate in *The Witch* has animal familiars with names that come straight from village trials, yet her own name comes from classical tradition and she uses Latin incantations and necromancy. Her aggressive sexual appetites and lurid relations with incubi who take the shape of young men have roots in Continental demonology. The chief source for Marston’s witch Erichtho in *Sophonisba* is Book VI of Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, and the witches who embody disorderly female power in the antimasque of Jonson’s *Masque of Queens* are reassembled into what Diane Purkiss has called “a muddle of otherness” (1996, 202) from bits and pieces of classical tradition as well as popular culture and religious tracts.

For Purkiss, this hybrid treatment of the witch almost always has reductive and trivializing results, a judgment she extends even to the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, calling them “a low-budget, frankly exploitative collage of randomly chosen bits of witch-lore, selected not for thematic significance but for ... sensation value” (1996, 207). The play, in her view, refuses a serious engagement with witchcraft and suppresses the complexity of women’s voices in witchcraft discourse. For other critics, the Weird Sisters stand as a notable exception to the rule that the hybridity of stage witches goes hand in hand with trivialization. Undeniably they are created out of incongruously disparate bits of witch-lore: in scene 1.1, they have the power to fly and are

associated with storms, like witches in Continental demonologies, while in 1.3, planning their revenge on the sailor's wife, they behave like the English witches of contemporary trials and pamphlet literature. Called "witches" in the stage directions, they refer to themselves as "Weird Sisters," a name that alludes to the "goddesses of destiny" and "creatures of the elder world" in Holinshed's *Chronicles*. In Macbeth's imagination (2.1.53) and in scene 3.5 they are followers of Hecate, while Banquo hears the devil speak in them (1.3.107) and Lady Macbeth hears "fate and metaphysical aid" (1.5.25). They are prophets, seers, spell-casters, and conjurers of apparitions – and also "juggling fiends" (5.8.19) whose most devastating magic is revealed to be little more than clever wordplay and con-artistry. Ultimately Shakespeare gives them their own kind of coherence and uncanny power, enough so that Terry Eagleton can plausibly claim them as "the heroines of the piece," whose "words and bodies mock rigorous boundaries and make sport of fixed positions, unhinging received meanings as they dance, dissolve and re-materialize" (1986, 1–2). As Stephen Greenblatt has also argued, their rich ambiguities and shifting identities are integral to the play's preoccupation with liminality, blurred boundaries, and equivocation (1993, 123–7). Though Purkiss is right to call our attention to the compelling power of women's stories about witchcraft and to point out that the nonliterary documents can sometimes be more complex and fascinating than canonical literary texts, perhaps she displays her own kind of reductiveness when she dismisses the Weird Sisters as low-budget exploitation and pandering.

Rowley, Dekker, and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (Corbin and Sedge 1986) comes the closest to giving a village-level witch figure some depth and complexity. Its chief source is a pamphlet by a Protestant clergyman, Henry Goodcole (1621), who examined Elizabeth Sawyer in prison after she had been convicted of witchcraft. In some ways, however, Mother Sawyer's story as constructed by the play seems more closely modeled on the confession of Elizabeth Bennett, available in an earlier pamphlet which the authors may also have consulted. Like Bennett, Sawyer is called names such as "old witch" and "old trot" before she actually becomes a witch. She is poor and subject to abuse from her neighbors. The devil, appearing to her as Dog, initiates contact with her and actively pressures her into becoming a witch, through a mix of sly manipulations and offers of companionship and sympathy. Like Bennett's familiars, Dog eventually succeeds in coaxing her into intentional acts of witchcraft by appealing to her desire for revenge upon her abusive neighbors. From thereon the play rewrites her story as revenge tragedy. Its representation of Elizabeth Sawyer is well nuanced and often moving, giving emphasis to the role of social construction in the making of a witch. Though Sawyer is eventually convicted and punished with death at the play's end, she is also an effective voice of social critique, calling attention to corruption in the world around her.

Future Directions for Study

By the 1630s and 1640s, the theater was losing interest in magical practices; witches and magicians appear, if at all, in very marginalized roles. Belief in the reality of spirits or occult powers was on the wane in elite circles, and after the 1640s the antiwitchcraft laws in England were seldom enforced, though they remained on the books until 1736 (Bostridge 1997). Yet it would be a mistake to relegate the theater's concern with magical themes to an exotically distant past, given the global context of today's classrooms and stage and screen productions. Evidence of the modernity of witchcraft and magical beliefs is all around us (Hutton 2001). The New Age repackaging of astrology and other early modern beliefs is apparent in many aisles of suburban

Barnes & Noble bookstores, and internet websites devoted to alchemy and magic make available the works of men such as John Dee and Cornelius Agrippa, finding them of more than historical interest. Echoes of old debates about white witchcraft can be heard in the controversies surrounding wiccan and neopagan groups on US campuses and the prospect of Satan worship can still cause alarm, as a 2014 incident at Harvard University attests (Delwiche and Patel 2014). Some postcolonial countries such as Burkina Faso and Cameroon have passed antiwitchcraft laws in the name of indigenous beliefs; elsewhere, as in post-apartheid South Africa and post-glasnost Russia, the state gives no official sanction to such beliefs but reports incidents of witch-killings. It is an odd testament to the insularity of the academic world, then, that even some very recently published books on early modern witchcraft and magic treat these beliefs as relics of a long-dead, prescientific world. Fortunately, this may be changing, as historians and literary scholars of the early modern period become more aware of work by recent anthropologists and the internet makes news from around the world readily available (Behringer 2004, 229–48; Geschiere 2013). It should be no surprise that, in their subtle interrogations of magical themes and identities, Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists have again become our contemporaries.

NOTES

- 1 The Act is reprinted in Rosen (1991, 54–6).
- 2 Thus, for example, John Jewel proclaimed in a sermon before Queen Elizabeth shortly before the passage of the Act that witches and sorcerers were “marvellously increased within your grace’s realm. These eyes have seen most evident and manifest marks of their wickedness” (qtd. in Kittredge 1972, 252). A similar remark is included in the Act against Conjurations.
- 3 The main source for Walsh’s case is *The Examination of John Walsb* (1566; reprinted in Rosen 1991, 64–71).

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Antitheatricality: The Theater as Scourge

Leah S. Marcus

It has long served as a source of bemusement to devotees of Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists that during the creative flowering of the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline theater, a sizable contingent of Londoners were strongly – and increasingly rabidly – opposed to the public stage. A steady stream of pamphleteers, beginning with John Northbrooke in 1577, excoriated the drama along with other “idle pastimes” as agents that were corrupting public morals. Shakespeare and his fellows may have been, as in Ben Jonson’s encomium in the front matter to the Shakespeare First Folio (1623), “*not of an age, but for all time!*” but they were not universally beloved in their own times. The title of the present collection, billed as a “Companion,” suggests that Renaissance drama is companionable, good to be around, perhaps even good for us. So it is perhaps worth exploring the opposition’s case: why were the antitheatricalists so active during the period from the opening of London’s first “permanent” and dedicated playhouse in 1576, the Theatre in Shoreditch, through to the parliamentary order in 1642 that “publike Stage-Playes shall cease” (qtd. in Bentley 1941–68, 2: 690)? That edict shuttered the London theaters for nearly two decades and marked at least a temporary victory for the antitheatricalists. If we believe that the theater wields actual transformative power over its audiences as opposed to constituting a superficial and inconsequential pastime, then perhaps the antitheatricalists got a few things right.

One of the reasons we have failed to take them seriously is the deflating mockery of their opponents. We know the London antitheatricalists best through Ben Jonson’s hilarious and devastating portrait of Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in *Bartholomew Fair* (1616) and other similarly perceptually challenged characters like Malvolio from *Twelfth Night* (1601) and Ananias and Tribulation from *The Alchemist* (1610). Zeal-of-the-Land Busy stalks Smithfield muttering imprecations against the vanities of the fair and taking particular notice at a climactic moment of its “Dagon,” the puppet show, in which, he assumes, the puppet-players enacting women’s roles are cross-dressed men, as in the theaters of London. He rants to the puppets, “my main

argument against you is that you are an abomination; for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male." One of the puppets refutes this "old stale argument against the players" and silences Busy by lifting his garment and showing that he lacks genitalia altogether (5.5.87–91). After such a *reductio ad absurdum* how can the early modern antitheatricalists be taken seriously? In fact, many who wrote against the theater were far from resembling Puritan caricatures like Busy, and the invective against cross-dressing was usually a relatively minor element of their case, not present at all in many printed tracts. Their basic contention was much more fundamental: that the drama was a powerful medium that changed its audiences in ways that were dangerous and hard to control.

Over the six and a half decades of early modern antitheatrical propaganda, different pamphleteers emphasized varying elements of peril associated with the stage, but a common baseline was public safety. The London Corporation, which generally banned public stage plays from the areas under its jurisdiction, was worried about crowd control and the spread of disease. There were several occasions, such as the 1617 Shrovetide riot at the Cockpit by rowdy apprentices, in which the theater served as the occasion for "public disorders." Moreover, although the City fathers did not understand the microbiology of contagion as we do, they noted that dramatic performances dangerously increased the rate of infection by plague and other contagious diseases. Major outbreaks of the plague struck London every few years: 1569, 1582, 1593, 1603–10, 1625, 1636. Even before the opening of the Theatre in 1576, London authorities had prohibited plays for health reasons; in the following decades, either they or the Privy Council or the two bodies operating in concert regularly shut down the theaters when plague deaths exceeded a specified quota per week (F. Wilson [1927] 1963; Barroll 1991, 70–116).

We moderns have tended to doubt the motives of these zealous civic authorities and Privy Councilors, suspecting them of having used pestilence as a pretext for suppressing an unruly institution that they distrusted on political or religious grounds. Just what was the "contagion" they feared? In order to understand the early modern antitheatrical state of mind, we need to think ourselves back into a pre-Cartesian culture in which the physical and the spiritual were not posited as distinct realms, and in which moral contagion could operate as a material force over the human organism. Mere rhetoric on its own had the power to transform its auditors: Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetorique* notes of printed books that "Who that toucheth Pitch shall be [de]filed with it, and he that goeth in the Sunne shall be Sunne burnt, although he think not of it. So they that wil reade this or such like bookes, shall in the ende be as the bookes are" ([1553] 1585). Wilson makes the same case for oratory, citing the image of Hercules drawing his auditors "lincked together by the eares in a chain" as a way of describing the compelling power of rhetoric to control its listeners "drawe them and leade them euen as he lusted" (sigs. A5v, A7).

If this was true of written or spoken eloquence, how much more true of theater, in which the power of the word was augmented by action on stage that powerfully struck the eye? Basing themselves on a physiology that posited auditory and visual stimuli as forces that could materially alter their auditors through their passions, early modern antitheatrical writers used a language of boundary transgression and physical assault to describe the effects of theater on its hapless audiences. Stephen Gosson (1579) sees his task in medical terms: he is a physician who shows the "rank flesh" of a body corrupted by theater to a surgeon so that the gangrene can be excised. He likens plays to a secret "gunshotte of affection" that can slip unnoticed into the "pruie entries of the eare," infect the heart, and "gaule the minde"; but he also likens plays to "*Basiliskes* of the world, that poyson, as well with the beame of their sighte, as with the breath of their mouth" (sigs. B7, B8). The distinction we would likely posit between physical disease and

mental contagion did not exist in any clear-cut way for these early modern theorists: what struck the eye and ear struck the mind with a material force that altered it, possibly improving it (as Thomas Wilson hoped his *Art of Rhetorique* would do) but quite possibly inflicting damage. For those who feared its power, then, the theater was not just a hotbed of plague, it was itself a form of plague that could assault the human organism with the same force as a bullet, poison, or disease (Paster 2004; MacKay 2011; Mullaney 2007). Both the friends of London's theater and its enemies agreed that it potentially had great power. Where they differed was in their evaluation of that power's dominant effects.

To put the issue in terms of recent literary and social theory, the controversy over the power of theater was rooted in a vitalist materialist belief in the ability of elements of a community to influence other elements through the power of emotional contagion (Bennett 2010; Burwick and Douglas 1992; Marks 1998; Latour 2005; Fraser, Kember, and Lury 2006). An audience in the theater was such a group, indeed a particularly well-defined and vulnerable group since in the new, purpose-built playhouses they for the first time became paying customers who were enclosed within the playhouse walls and therefore more captive to the performance than had been the case with the earlier open, street-based forms of theater, from which any onlooker could easily stroll away. Richard Preiss (2013) has argued suggestively that by creating an interior space for drama, the Theatre in 1576 effectively created dramatic interiority: by closing plays off from their surroundings, early theatrical entrepreneurs simultaneously created a mystique of hidden inwardness associated with playhouses that aroused fascination and also distrust at what was acted in secrecy inside them.

It is no accident, then, that the new London playhouses became a magnet for moral reformers who feared human inwardness, particularly the human penchant for hypocrisy and secret vice. The first antitheatrical tract, John Northbrooke's *Treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes or Enterluds ... are reprobred* (1577), appeared only a year after the opening of the Theatre. In numerous areas of sixteenth-century culture we see an accumulation of anxiety surrounding religious practices tainted by their association with Catholicism and a displacement of that anxiety onto other objects: so, as Jeffrey Shoulson (2013) has argued, London's Jewish *conversos*, who could never be Christian enough to be fully trusted, became a lightning rod for fears about England's frequent reversals of religious allegiance and the difficulty of determining true belief. And as numerous scholars have pointed out, the theater itself, with its endemic shape-shifting and role playing, was a similar catalyst for fears about identity, particularly in relation to the Roman Catholic past (Shoulson 2013; Barish 1981, 80–130). Through their vehemence and obsessive reiteration of the dangers of the drama, antitheatrical writers registered the continued, though suppressed, power that banished ritual observances continued to hold over the culture.

Recent scholars of early modern literature have placed particular emphasis on the repeated trauma experienced by people of England as they suffered through the frequent changes in religion: first the Henrician reformation and official break from the Catholic Church; then the much more iconoclastic Edwardine reforms; then a sudden return to Catholicism under Queen Mary Tudor; then an erasure of most of the Catholic practices restored by Mary with the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558; and finally Elizabeth's excommunication by Pope Pius V in 1570, which marked an irretrievable breach with Rome. Zealous Protestants and Catholics may have kept the faith during this confusing sequence of events, but many Christians were not certain what to believe or which religious institutions they could count on, if any (Duffy 2002). Even for confirmed Protestants, we can speculate, the pace and uncertainty of religious change surely created anxiety over the status of past observances. A whole way of life based on a cycle of ritual

practices – some of them, like the Feast of Corpus Christi, directly linked with communal dramatic productions – had been gradually suppressed; a religious aesthetic based on the visual impact of iconography and other visual aids to devotion was supplanted by an iconoclastic mindset that barred most visual imagery in ecclesiastical settings as anathema to true Christians. The theater, with its very public inwardness, was for many Londoners an abiding repository for all that had been swept away.

This chapter will attempt to recover early modern antitheatricality as not just a crabbed and idiosyncratic reaction to a glorious institution but as a phenomenon inextricably linked to theatricality itself. As Martin Puchner has trenchantly remarked in reference to more recent outbursts of opposition to theater,

One does not need to turn to Freud in order to understand how much the act of resistance remains determined by that which is being resisted. The negation and rejection inherent in the term *anti*-theatricalism is therefore not to be understood as a doing away with the theater, but as a process that is dependent on that which it negates and to which it therefore remains calibrated. (2002, 2)

Beginning in 1577 with Northbrooke's pioneering treatise, early modern antitheatricalists as much as acknowledged the theater as a reference point, a source of continuing power over them, by placing such shrill and repeated emphasis on its pathological contagion, its power to corrupt the soul.

During the early years of the English Reformation, stage plays on biblical or moral themes had carried no particular onus. The celebrated Protestant martyrologist John Foxe associated closely with religious dramatists like John Bale and wrote religious plays in Latin himself, one of which, *Christus triumphans*, was published in 1556. The surviving medieval cycle plays during the early decades of the Reformation in England show clear signs of adaptation to Protestant sensibilities by omitting plays that focused on the Virgin Mary or the Eucharist. In the 1560s and 1570s, however, they were suppressed altogether (O'Connell 2000, 14–35; Diehl 1997). Eventually part of Foxe's *Christus triumphans* was published in English translation, but as a "Treatise" rather than a play (Foxe 1579; Olsen 1973, 58–66). In the 1570 edition of the *Actes and Monuments*, John Foxe was still able to claim that "Preachers, Printers, & Players . . . be set vp of God, as a triple bullwarke against the triple crown of the Pope" (p. 1524), and the statement remains in later editions.¹ Occasional plays on religious topics continued to surface in the 1590s and early seventeenth century (O'Connell 2000, 106–14). But increasingly, the "hotter" Protestant controversialists placed "Players" and "Preachers" at opposite poles of a moral continuum: the theater was constructed as a figure for that which was inward, hidden, suppressed – in the language of some of the controversialists, a "devil chapel" or "temple of Venus" operating in a space that any true Christians would of course wish to avoid. Preaching, within this antitheatrical, Calvinist mindset, was at the opposite pole, an antidote to the seemingly boundless corruption within every individual sinner.

That being said, the theater and the antitheatricalists of the era are often hard to distinguish: many of those who joined the pamphlet campaign against plays were themselves associated with the theater – or associated themselves with it through the very writings that attempted to suppress it. Stephen Gosson had written several plays at university shortly before he penned his first antitheatrical tract; in the second, *Playes Confuted in five Actions* (1582), he offered a lengthy explanation and apology for his earlier lapses into drama, but also structured his tract in "five Actions," imitating the five-act structure of a play. William Rankins, author of the antitheatrical

Mirrovr of Monsters: Wherein is plainly described the manifold vices, & spotted enormities, that are caused by the infectious sight of Playes (1587), shapes much of his pamphlet as a vivid description of an opulent masque in the Chapel of Adultery, which he identifies in a marginal note as London's playhouses, the "Theater & Curtine" (sig. B4v). Given his verve for bringing atrocity to life, it comes as no great surprise that Rankins went on to become a playwright himself, as did Anthony Munday after writing his antitheatrical tract *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* (1580).

Similarly, Philip Stubbes in his popular *Anatomie of Abuses*, inveighs mightily against the inherent corruption of stage plays, but in an earlier section of the tract imagines God as striking down Sabbath breakers from the "Theator, of Heauen" ([1595] 2002, 196) – an odd image for one who goes on to argue that the theater was an invention of the Devil. The most virulent early modern practitioner of the antitheatrical tract was William Prynne, who was tried and convicted of sedition for his mammoth treatise *Histrion-Mastix* (1633), in which he indirectly cast aspersions on Queen Henrietta Maria (who took speaking parts in pastoral drama performed at Court) by calling women actors "notorious whores" in his index and referring readers to the relevant passages in the body of his book (sig. 6R4). Yet Prynne subtitled his work *the Players Scourge, or, Actors Tragaedie* and structured it with Act and scene divisions and even occasional choruses.

We are reminded of the observation made by W. J. T. Mitchell, in conversation with Karl Marx, that the "Christian iconoclast *Is the idolater*" (1986, 200).² The antitheatricalists expressed their antipathy for stage plays with an imaginative power that eerily replicates the form they strove so mightily to suppress. Their vehemence was, they claimed, a necessary counter to the force and charisma of the theater itself. They were engaged in the almost impossible task of silencing a powerful institution that touched thousands of lives in London every year; their weapon, the printed word, was unlikely to reach nearly so many readers as there were attendees at the theater, if only because literacy was not a prerequisite for the enjoyment of plays in performance. Of course, tracts like *Histrion-Mastix* were supplemented by numerous sermons of the period that condemned stage plays, particularly plays performed on the Sabbath; but as Prynne complained, more playbooks were printed than sermons – no fewer, he claimed, than forty thousand in the two years before *Histrion-Mastix* (1633, sig. *3). Presumably he meant copies, not editions, but the number is still startlingly large. If his statistics were unreliable, his hyperbole nevertheless registers his feeling of embattlement as a David against Goliath. The vehemence of the antitheatrical writers comes partly from their perception of the overwhelming cultural cachet of the theater and its defenders – such "Giantlike Enemies," as Prynne calls them (sig. **6v) – and suggests that these writers and their supporters felt engulfed and smothered by the theater, even though as a London institution it was now largely confined to purpose-built houses and therefore easy enough to avoid. In the words of Preiss (2013, 52), "the antitheatricalists cannot seem to decide if the playhouse is virus or host, the thing you are inside or the thing inside you." Even the humanist ideal of *honestas*, which Phil Withington defines as "the notion that, in order to live civilly and honestly together, people needed to be able to assess their place or role within any social context, to recognize the conventions and behaviour required for that context, and in this way to act and speak appropriately and profitably" (2013, 517), was theatrical to its core. How could even the most zealous Christians of the period avoid theatricality when they were "inside" an early modern culture in which it was so pervasive, particularly in the many surviving remnants of the nation's Catholic past and in the classically grounded humanism that was the educated *lingua franca* and the carrier of such a potent legacy from pagan antiquity?

Stephen Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse* (1579) was dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney (who did not appreciate the gesture) and attacks the "poison" of the theater from a strongly humanist point of view. Gosson writes in a highly euphuistic style studded with classical examples both historical and mythological: Caligula and his troops in France, Homer's "Iliades," Ovid, Simonides, Cadmus, Hercules, Bacchus, and Venus, to cite only his opening pages. But Gosson is uncomfortably aware that the elements of classical civilization he wishes to value are inseparable from the theatrical culture he condemns, noting, somewhat plaintively, that "Poets are the whetstones of wit," and that "where hony and gall are mixed, it will be hard to seuer the one from the other" (Epistle Dedicatory and sigs. A1–A2). His strategy is to pit a long list of classical writers against the abuses rampant in their own culture. He notes the existence of corrupt institutions like the theater in ancient Greece and Rome, but argues that the gravest ancients, beginning with Plato, condemned the excesses of their own time just as he does the theater in his day. To the extent that classical writers valued music and poetry, it was the measured, elevated poetry of "solemne feastes" that they prized, not the juggling arts of the theater (sig. A7v). Just as, according to some ancient moralists, Rome fell because of the proliferation of the drama and other enervating pastimes, so England, through her intoxication with stage plays, risked the destruction of her ancient mettle and martial discipline: "Small are the abuses, and sleight are the faultes, that nowe in Theaters escape the Poets pen: But tal Cedars, from little graynes shoote high; . . . One little sparke, fyers a whole Citie" (sig. C4v). Unlike some of its successors, Gosson's tract is relatively modest and brief. He apologizes for the smallness of his book, but nevertheless hopes that like the cedar from a tiny grain, it will usher in vast amendments in public morals and serve as a ready antidote to the seemingly innocuous London poison by which "Poets in Theaters . . . wounde the conscience" (sig. B6v).

Most antitheatrical writers were considerably more vehement than Gosson, condemning the London stage on broader religious grounds by reviving the ancient campaign of early Christian fathers against the pagan theaters of late antiquity. Plays are not to be tolerated, according to Lactantius, Chrisostomos, Cyprian, and other early authorities, because of their origins in the veneration of pagan deities – essentially a form of devil worship. We see this strain of argument already in John Northbrooke's *Treatise* (1577), in which "AGE" explains to "YOVTH" that Roman plays had their origins in various *Iudi* dedicated to gods like Bacchus and Flora and therefore encouraged vice and debauchery: "For these causes was it, that the godly Fathers wrote so earnestly against such Playes and Enterludes, and also commaunded by Councils, that none shoulde go or come to Playes. . . . Chrisostome calleth those places & playing of Enterludes, *Festa Satana*, Sathans banquets" (sig. I4). Philip Stubbes repeats Chrisostomos on plays as "*feasts of the deuill*" and elaborates,

Constantius, ordained that no Player, shuld be admitted to the Table of the Lord. Then, seeing that Playes were inuented by the deuill, practized by the **Heathen Gentiles**, and dedicated to their false Idols, gods and goddesses, as the House, Stage, and Apparell to **Venus**: the Musicke to **Appollo**: the penning to **Minerua** & the Muses: the action and pronounciation, to **Mercurie**, and the rest: It is more then manifest, that they are no fit exercises for Christian men to follow. ([1595] 2002, 201–2; cf. Gosson 1582, sig. D8)

In his *Mirrovr of Monsters* Rankins is even bolder, acknowledging that players in his time have been privileged by Queen Elizabeth but protesting that "they are sent from their great captaine Sathan (under whose banner they beare armes) to deceiue the world, to lead the people with

inticing shewes to the diuell, to seduce them to sinne, and well tuned strings, to sound pleasing melodie, when people in heapes daunce to the diuell,” or even more horrifyingly, turn themselves into the “limbs, proportion, and members of Sathan” (1587, sig. B2v). Even though they were steeped in classical learning, these antitheatricalists placed distrust of heathenism at the center of their attacks. They identified post-Reformation England with the time of the early Christian Church before it was overwhelmed by “Popish” corruption, and saw themselves as latter-day Chrisostoms, campaigning against a strain of heathenism that survived in their midst from before the dawn of Christianity.

It follows from this set of equivalences that the Roman Catholics of their day were the contemporary counterpart to the ancient heathens. Antitheatrical writers could have argued that the drama was unacceptable because it was Catholic and therefore associated with England’s pre-Reformation past. But surprisingly few of them before Prynne (1633) used this line of attack in any detail, even though it had been a staple of early Protestant rhetoric to ridicule Catholic ritual by likening the Mass to a stage play. Prynne makes an extended case for the drama as unacceptably “Popish.” Roman Catholics are especially devoted to theatrical spectacles: just as the early Christian fathers were “chary, and fearefull . . . of admitting the Festiuities, Customes, Ceremonies, Reliques, or Inuentions of Idolatrous Pagans” (sig. D2v), so reformed Christians should be fearful of similar survivals from Catholicism. Prynne cites authorities both pro and con who liken the Mass to a “*Tragicke Play*” in which the priest reenacts the Passion of Christ, and contends that plays about Christian subjects are as dangerous as the Mass: “Popish Priests and Iesuites in forraigne partes,” who “*have turned the Sacrament of Christs body and blood into a Masse-play*” have likewise

trans-formed their Masse itself, together with the whole storie of Christs birth, his life, his passion, and all other parts of their Ecclesiasticall service into Stage-playes. . . . What wickednesse, what blasphemie like to this, as thus to Deifie a Player, and to bring the very Throne, the Maiesty of God himselfe, yea, the persons of the eternall Father, Sonne, and God of glory on the Stage? (sig. P4v–Q1)

Prynne’s argument posits Catholic religious drama as “stigmatical,” designed to replicate the death of Christ on the Cross and induce a like suffering in the observer that ties him or her to the ritual of the Catholic Mass (MacKay 2011, 105–36). But Prynne’s strictures would outlaw even Protestant plays like Foxe’s *Christus Triumphans*: in Prynne’s thinking, all drama, even that on secular subjects, is contaminated by its association with Catholic ritual practices as well as its ties to heathen antiquity.

Most antitheatrical writers were aware of Aristotle’s theory of catharsis and of contemporary defenses of the drama, culminating in Thomas Heywood’s *Apology for Actors* (1612), which argued that plays serve a salutary function by holding a mirror up to nature and exposing hidden vice. The antitheatricalists claimed that such quasi-spiritual functions were better performed by the clergy than by the dangerously polluted stage. As Ellen MacKay (2011) has argued, they rejected the drama’s cathartic function as intrusive and violent. Prynne condemned stage plays as “tyrannical” in that, like an overbearing monarch, they subjected their spectators to a barrage of violence: “Bloody, and Tyrannicall; breathing out Malice, Anger, Fury, Crueltie, Tyrannie, Fiercenesse, Treason, Rapine, Violence, Oppression, Murther, and Reuenge,” all of which he terms “the constant Theames, and chiefe Ingredients, of all our Tragedies” (1633, sig. K4v). In the same vein, Gosson pointed out that in ancient Rome, the emperors used the theaters as a way of executing condemned prisoners; even the spectacles at the Coliseum were a form of theater in

which early Christians were persecuted for their faith. Both pro- and antitheatricalists agreed that plays “shock the conscience,” but “whereas defenders of the stage adopt this shock as the divine means of exposing a corrupt soul, to Gosson what is shocking is the illegitimacy of such a practice,” usurping the role of the courts and ultimately of God as ultimate judge (MacKay 2011, 31–2). If we agree with both sides that the theater has a powerful ability to ferret out that which people more typically keep hidden, then we can understand yet another reason why the theater represented such a danger in the view of early modern antitheatricalists: not only did it expose its audiences to contagion by its vice, but its much vaunted “theater of conscience,” attempted, for example, by Hamlet in his “Mousetrap” to reveal Claudius’s guilt, was at its core a perilous usurpation of religious and judicial functions legitimately lodged elsewhere and therefore inseparable from tyranny.

This argument has a strikingly modern ring to it, assuming that we accept its premise that the theater has power to mold its audiences. And indeed, as MacKay (2011) also notes, there are many points of correlation between early modern and twentieth-century theories of theater, especially Antonin Artaud’s (1958) associations of the theater with plague and his “theater of cruelty.” For many late nineteenth- and twentieth-century theorists, the break with theater is a break into modernity: Puchner (2002, 1–4) cites Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin, and Michael Fried. Obviously these writers were not antitheatrical in the same degree as Gosson or Prynne. But many elements of the early modern antitheatricality that may seem retrograde to us can be reinterpreted as early stirrings of modernity: the desire for a definitive rupture with a ritual past, and the association of art with tyranny and with the autocratic centralization of political and cultural authority.

Even some of the antitheatricalists’ xenophobia can be understood as grounded in a fear of engulfment by international Catholicism and hence by tyranny: writers like Prynne who saw England as threatened by an alliance of imperial forces from Spain and the Holy Roman Empire often registered the adoption of Continental theatrical fashions as a step toward infiltration that would eventually bring about England’s relapse into heathenism. Not coincidentally, the rise of antitheatrical sentiment in London coincided not only with the construction of the new, purpose-built theaters but also with a fad for imported dramatic models from Italy and France and from classical Greece and Rome (see Raphael Falco, Chapter 3 in this volume). Gosson complained that his countrymen had a “sharper smacke of Italian deuises in their heads, then of English religion in their heartes” (1582, sigs. B4v–B5).

Similarly, antitheatricalists often registered fear of the influence of “New World” discovery and cultural contacts – not because they were necessarily opposed to English exploration and empire-building but because of their fear of engulfment. In the first two editions of his *Anatomie of Abuses* Stubbes claims to be recently returned from several months of travel in an alien place – Ailgna – a land of heroic and magnanimous people who were nevertheless the most “corrupt, wicked,” and “peruerse, liuing vpon the face of the earth” (2002, 60). Of course Stubbes meant the disguised name “Ailgna,” Anglia spelled backward, to be transparent and replaced it with “England” in the 1595 edition (2002, 21–7). By placing English customs in alien territory, he encouraged readers of all the editions of his tract to register suspect English practices with the same degree of shock and wonder that they might bring to a New World encounter: their estranged gaze at their own culture would help identify its “Abuses” for the heathen abominations they were.

In the same vein, Rankins’ tract is written as a travel narrative of his visit to a country called “Terralbon,” a land of milk and honey ruled by a “most virtuous and godlie princesse” but

appearing more savage than Christian because of its tolerance for “Comedians” and “Players” otherwise known as “Monsters” who bring the nation down with themselves into perdition (1587, sigs. B1v–B2). If, as contemporaries sometimes suggested, going to the theater was a vicarious journey into foreign lands, then for antitheatricalists the trip was, as it proved to be in a more direct physical sense for many actual New World travelers, a source of disease and contagion. As they looked at the Americas, the antitheatricalists saw endemic rituals among indigenous peoples that looked suspiciously like the very “Popish” and pagan abuses they were striving to suppress in their own country; or (even worse) they saw indigenous peoples being converted by the Spanish and Portuguese to a Catholicism that readily translated into heathenism. The seeming xenophobia of these writers was specifically linked to their fear of reconquest and forced reversion to popery (Harris 2013). Of course, it also carried a significant element of nationalism, which, for better or for worse, was linked to modernization: by reinforcing prejudice against the “contamination” of lands outside their own, antitheatricalists helped to clarify the boundaries and distinctness of Protestant England and to set the stage for British expansion and empire-building in the centuries to come.

Given the interpenetration of pro- and antitheatrical points of view in early modern London, it comes as no surprise that its playwrights could also mistrust the theater. Jonas Barish (1981) has made a striking case for Ben Jonson’s suspicion of the theater: even though the playwright ridiculed antitheatricalists, he shared some of their mistrust of the power of theatricality, particularly of its visual effects when operating independent of language: “Shows! Mighty Shows! . . . What need of prose, / Or verse, or sense, to express immortal you?”³ Plays like *Macbeth* (1606), with its eerie half-magical visions of daggers, bloody children, and other horrors, or *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–13), with its lurid shows of a severed hand, madmen, and a horrific arrangement of artificial corpses meant to crush the Duchess’ spirit, can be interpreted as both utilizing and critiquing the power of hypervisual imagery to seduce and destroy the spectator (Diehl 1997, 94–124). Plays within plays, as in the drama of “Soliman and Persida” in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587), or Tamora’s masque of Revenge, Rape, and Murder in *Titus Andronicus* (1594) often result in mass executions, as though to confirm the antitheatricalists’ claims about the theater’s lethal power.

The early modern theater unquestionably drew energy and complexity from the accusations of its shadowy doubles, the antitheatricalists: in a play like *Doctor Faustus* (1592), what is the status of the conjuring of devils? Even if the conjuring is only “played,” might the magic words still have efficacy? The stage action picks up energy from its transgressive resemblance to offstage demonism, offering in its central action a metatheatrical comment on the power of the stage itself to conjure its audiences into submission to its magic. Even Hamlet, who famously debunks the merely theatrical in favor of something inward and authentic – “I have that within which passes show, / These but the trappings and the suits of woe” (1.2.85–6) – discovers, at least as the play has often been read, that the “real” as opposed to the “acted” is an infinite regress rather than a recoverable essence. If all the world’s a stage, as Jaques famously declaims in *As You Like It* (1599), then antitheatricality is subsumed within theatrical experience rather than evaluating it from the outside. For all their hostility to the stage, the antitheatricalists inhabited the same universe as the playwrights and helped to determine the shape of the contemporary theater through their relentless pressure on that which they perceived as false, blasphemous, and demonic (Diehl 1997, 63–81).

Over time, literary critics have varied markedly in their assessment of the stage’s self-critique in relation to the arguments of its detractors: is the fundamental purpose of such critique to

redirect antitheatrical argument by embedding it within a broader dramatic structure that defends the theater? Or is it, as MacKay has argued, at its base a suicidal gesture, an acknowledgment of the destructive power of theater that moves the institution itself in apocalyptic fashion toward its dissolution? Huston Diehl argues, for example, that *Hamlet* drives its audiences inward toward a profoundly Protestant self-examination and self-knowledge (Diehl 1997, 85–91), while MacKay (2011, 47–71) interprets the play as exposing the bankruptcy of the classically inspired notion of the theater of conscience, which leads in Act 5 of *Hamlet*, as it might have in a Roman amphitheater, to a general slaughter.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to settle the debate: the thrust of any given play will vary markedly depending on its staging, the particular circumstances surrounding the performance, and a host of other factors that need to be considered in evaluating its effects, many of which are unrecoverable after the performance. But one thing is clear: depending on how we define the term, many playwrights of the period can easily be numbered among the antitheatricalists. Those who wrote against the theater from outside it rather than within it were not necessarily a rabble of carping, envious detractors but, rather, its intimates, who shared a vision of its power over its audiences and subjected that power to close and skeptical interrogation. The fact that many of their central arguments have been revived in twentieth- and twenty-first century debates about the status and value of the stage suggests, paradoxically, that early modern antitheatricalists have played an important role in theorizing and nurturing the drama. It is more important that plays matter than that they be defined as good.

NOTES

- 1 For the citation from Foxe, I am indebted to Mullaney (2013). See also Greengrass and Loades (2011).
- 2 I am also indebted to Mitchell's broader discussion (1986, 196–202).
- 3 Cited from "An Expostulation w[i]th Inigo Jones" (ll. 39–41), in Donaldson (1985, 463). See also Barish (1981, 132–54); O'Connell (2000).

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Part II

Theater History

Performance: Audiences, Actors, Stage Business

S. P. Cerasano

“Performance” is a topic of enormous breadth and depth, and no single chapter can do justice to all of the historical and aesthetic aspects of such an area of study. This is especially the case currently when scholars have not only had time to examine early dramatic texts and historical documents, but when the use of reconstructed playing spaces such as the New Globe and its newer neighbor the Blackfriars Theater (both in London), together with all-male performances and the archaeological excavation of the Rose Playhouse (built in 1587), have enlarged our sense of the production conditions that early modern actors, dramatists, and spectators would have experienced. This chapter provides an overview of some key historical elements that define the ongoing conversation, while the bibliography expands upon these topics and points the way to related areas of enquiry.

Envisioning Early Performances and Audiences

Editors and theater historians have, for some years, grappled with the difficulties of interpreting early modern stage directions; however, some of the barriers separating historians from discovering fully the nature of original performance practices are embedded in the fundamentals of terminology. A term such as “playhouse” gives the illusion of concreteness. After all, we have some sense of the architecture of the Elizabethan theaters with their boards and mortar, their trapdoors and discovery spaces. Yet the vocabulary we employ with a level of certainty was unstable in the sixteenth century when the London theaters were built. The “playhouses” established by the 1590s were, a decade earlier, referred to formerly as “playing-houses” (a term associated with a location where bowling, dicing, or even tennis took place). During the same period, the term “performance” referred to doing something or carrying out an action, as, for example, in “the performance of a duty.” (The use of this in reference to an artistic endeavor appears to be an early seventeenth-century phenomenon. Similarly, a “performer,” meaning an

“entertainer,” appears around the same time.) By contrast, Elizabethans would have spoken of “actors” or “(stage-) players” who were engaged in “making a play” or a “stage play” (as opposed to other kinds of “play”). The location we identify as a “stage” would have been known earlier as a “platform” because the word “stage” referred, rather broadly, to any structure that persons stood upon. Therefore the term “stage” applied to the floor of a building, or a place for execution, or even a pulpit, as well as the raised platform in a theater. Yet just when it seems that this terminology is getting clearer, our sense of “performance” becomes clouded somewhat by the fact that we cannot actually reconstruct a particular early playhouse with great precision. It is much easier to reconstruct a sense of the early playhouses as structures in general than it is to rebuild them with exact accuracy of size or scale. Moreover, the design of the stage, the depth and height of the galleries, and the placement of features such as trapdoors and staircases might well have differed from one playhouse to another. Not least of all, the process of “play-making” was complex, encompassing a host of persons who were involved in the preparation of a play-text for performance (tailors, ruff-makers, cobblers, and prop makers) as well as the actors and musicians who participated in the actual staging before an audience.

Additionally, our sense of “performance” depends upon the ways in which we envision an audience. Here, historians have constructed many hypothetical audiences, especially for the public playhouses (specifically, the First Globe), which, they think, attracted a more diverse group of spectators than their private counterparts. The conversation began in 1941 when Alfred Harbage reconstructed a public playhouse audience made up primarily of London’s most prevalent group, the “craftsmen” as he characterized them. But simultaneously, Harbage – ever cognizant of the noblemen who licensed playing companies, and aware of the gentlemen’s rooms in the public playhouses that would have attracted affluent spectators – acknowledged that an audience might well have included both plebeian and courtly spectators. Of course this characterization, while not improbable, has become inadequate owing in part to the fact that it neglects the variety of educational and cultural backgrounds of the spectators. Instead Harbage (1941) primarily showcases Shakespeare’s talent by arguing for his “universality” and his ability to reach “all spectators” at the Globe, neglecting the fact that the large public playhouses of the period probably attracted similar audiences and that the playgoing public doubtless attended entertainments written by many different playwrights at more than one playhouse.

For years Harbage’s conclusions went unchallenged until Ann Jennalie Cook, also concentrating on Shakespeare’s audiences, wrote *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London* (1981). In sharp contrast to Harbage’s theory, Cook argued for an audience populated largely by the upper strata of the population, by which she meant those with some education, a moderate income, and a more elevated social status than the average tradesman. (Concurrently, she did not rule out the presence of tradesmen among the spectators.) More recently, Andrew Gurr (2004), who again privileges Shakespeare and the theaters with which he was associated, has argued for the preponderance of “average citizens” at two public playhouses (the Fortune and the Red Bull), with a mixture of the social elite and tradesmen at the Globe. As can be readily ascertained, the difficulty with all of these arguments lies in the attempt to construct – from sparse evidence – a group of spectators on the basis of their social background. Such approaches can easily adopt a defensive stance that implicitly seeks to treat Shakespeare, his plays, and the Globe audience as anomalous (somehow more highbrow, more talented, more deserving of adulation) than the dramatists and audiences involved with other contemporary playhouses, such as the First Fortune and the Red Bull. Given these pitfalls, there are other ways to revisit the issues of early performance and audience composition, to review the evidence, and to articulate some new

questions. For instance, we might ask how large the potential audience of playgoers was, how the geographical distribution of residents might have influenced the composition of an audience, and what the potential effect of all this upon some particular playhouses might have been. We might also wonder not only about the audience's behavior inside the playhouse, but about their expectations of what would transpire on stage.

Briefly stated, the historical facts are straightforward. In 1590 London contained approximately 200,000 residents. Thirty years on, this number had almost doubled. The population consisted of tradesmen and local merchants and their families, along with a sizable transient population of foreign merchants, dignitaries, and travelers. Whereas some districts, such as the Blackfriars and the Whitefriars, attracted an elite citizenry, most were not segregated in terms of either the nature of the properties that stood within a neighborhood or the types of persons who lived there. For instance, the neighborhood surrounding the Fortune Playhouse, located just north of London Wall in the area of Cripplegate postern, contained a jail, tenements rented by workaday citizens (as well as some of the theater's actors), and an impressive house owned by Lord Willoughby; but concurrently the area contained a much greater than average number of London's poor.

Moreover, the inhabitants of London were diverse and mobile, so the composition of a public playhouse audience could represent a broad cross-section of the population. Both numerical likelihood and anecdotal evidence support this. Johannes De Witt, a Dutch traveler made, in his own crude way, the only extant illustration of the inside of the Swan Playhouse (see Figure 16.1 in chapter 16), while, in 1621, a Spanish ambassador and his troupe attended a play at the Fortune Playhouse and were later treated to a banquet held in the playhouse yard. Simon Forman, a notorious astrologer and alchemist, saw numerous plays in the Bankside playhouses; he wooed and won his future wife in their gardens and even dispensed medical advice to Philip Henslowe, the owner of the Rose Playhouse. Shrove Tuesday riots – incited largely by city apprentices – became legendary during the period, occurring on several occasions at the Fortune Playhouse (the same playhouse that hosted the Spanish ambassador). Nor were all of London's residents eager to attend entertainments at the public playhouses. John Chamberlain, London's famous gadfly and amateur historian, avoided plays because he found them boring. More vocal opponents of the theaters continually referred to the pickpockets and prostitutes present in the audiences, and some clerics complained of the many persons who were distracted from their spiritual duties by the playhouses. Although any attempt to characterize the audience in detail will ultimately fail, the many types of spectators who attended plays can at least be identified.

The size of an average audience can only be estimated within limits. The capacity of most public playhouses seems to have varied from 1,000 to 3,000. Again, much of the evidence supporting this is anecdotal, although recent excavations of the Rose Playhouse foundation (built 1587) suggest that the number of spectators there fell somewhere in the middle range of these estimates. However, despite our clear knowledge of the size of the Rose (about seventy feet in diameter) and Fortune Playhouse (eighty feet by eighty feet at the outside walls), mathematical calculations are ultimately misleading. First, Elizabethans were physically smaller than modern spectators, and attendance levels in the early playhouses varied from day to day. Receipts collected by Philip Henslowe for performances at the Rose during the 1590s indicate that the playhouse was rarely full, except during the Christmas and New Year holiday season, and perhaps for the performances of certain wildly popular plays such as *Tamburlaine the Great* and *Doctor Faustus*. (Performances began around 2:00 p.m., toward the end of the workday, and even then, Friday and Saturday performances regularly drew larger audiences than those that took place earlier in the week.)

A small but notable handful of spectators will be remembered for having made comments that have had an inordinately large influence on the way that historians have written the history of the Elizabethan playhouses. The best known of these is Chamberlain, who described the fire that destroyed the First Fortune Playhouse in 1621 when it was “quite burnt downe in two howres” (Thomson 1965, 288). Other commentators include Edmund Howes, who expanded the account of playhouses when he edited the fifth edition of John Stow’s *Annales* in 1631, noting among other things that “the new built Beare garden” (renamed the Hope) “was built as well for playes, and Fencers prizes, as Bull bayting.” Also extant are the stray comments of several foreign ambassadors who witnessed performances at Court. Such documents are fascinating, but they offer scant insight into dramatic performances. Unhappily, historians lack the type of extended commentary that would allow them to determine how an audience responded to the whole of any one particular performance.

Some limited evidence of performance appears in visual form. There is, for example, the well-known title-page illustration to *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, printed in 1616 (and in some later printings as well). Here the main character of the play – thought by some to be modeled on Edward Alleyn, who was famous for performing the role in the 1590s – stands in the center of a circle of astrological symbols, his magic wand in one hand and a conjuring book in the other, calling up Mephistopheles. The devil, which is rising out of the floor, is costumed in a pair of dragon’s wings, with reptilian scales on his arms and horns on his head, while a long tail curls behind him and formidable talons are clearly visible growing out of his fingers. (In scene 3 (A-text) when Faustus initially calls up Mephistopheles, he remarks, “I charge thee to return and change thy shape, / Thou art too ugly to attend on me” (ll. 23–4). Then, later, in scene 7 (A-text) when Faustus considers repenting his sins and returning to God, the Evil Angel tells him, “If thou repent, devils shall tear thee in pieces” (l. 77). Faustus’ study, the scene for the conjuring, is identifiable from the decor of the room, which features a shelf of books as well as two astronomical instruments and three substantial books (all serving as the symbols of the scholar). Faustus is dressed in the part of an academic as well, wearing the medieval doctoral cap. The illustration, in which Faustus appears fully in command, neatly evokes the actor who was described by Thomas Fuller, the seventeenth-century churchman and historian, as “the Roscius of our age, so acting to the life, that he made any part (especially a majestic one) to become him.”

Although no handbook of stage principles existed, the expectations of the early modern spectators are mirrored partially in the play-texts that survive from the period. Clearly some aspects were expected as part of the spectacle. Dumb shows and firecrackers, apparitions and swordplay became quite conventional during the period. Nevertheless, the actors and playwrights demanded that spectators play an active role. As the Chorus informed the audience during the prologue to the A-text of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, their imaginative participation was essential to the success of any performance, whether they were being asked to envision elements that were not fully conveyed by the limited props and lack of large-scale scenery, or they were making up for whatever inadequacies belonged to the players or their texts. At the opening of the play, the onstage props probably consisted of a simple chair and a table on which a human skull and some books had been placed. When Faustus identified the volumes, one by one, the audience was to imagine the scholar’s great library; the skull, associated with medieval scholars and derived from the many familiar illustrations of St. Jerome, suggested that Faustus spent his days engaged in the contemplation of human mortality and the larger philosophical questions of life. Yet in introducing the scene, the Chorus remarks only, “and this [is] the man that in his study sits” (Chorus.28). It is up to the spectators to enlarge upon the basic elements of performance in their minds.

Scholars have long wondered whether some (if not all) plays were written to be performed at a specific theater, not so much owing to the design of the playing space (most playhouses offered similar architectural elements), but because the audiences might have varied from one theater to another. This question is perhaps impossible to answer; however, there is some evidence that plays written for performance at public playhouses could well have been played at Court or within smaller private venues, such as private homes. Such flexibility was one of the hallmarks of early modern plays, and considering the relationship between dramatic texts and specific playhouses raises another question: how would spectators have known which play would be performed at a particular theater? It has long been suggested that playbills were posted around and near the public playhouses (which tended to cluster in certain areas north of London Wall and in Southwark). Yet other evidence from Henslowe's *Diary* (Foakes 2002) suggests that, for a time, there was a sort of rotation in the pattern of scheduling certain kinds of plays. Spectators, for instance, knew in advance that new plays tended to be performed (and tested out) in the middle of the week, when fewer spectators attended, whereas popular fare was performed at the end of the week or on Saturday before larger audiences. Of course, as a play gained popularity it would have been scheduled more frequently, especially on Saturdays and during holiday periods (especially between Christmas and Twelfth Night) when audiences were large. Nor can we rule out the influence of simple word-of-mouth to boost a play's popularity. And there were some spectators – then, as today – who might simply venture to Southwark during their free hours, happy to take a chance on whatever was on stage that afternoon.

Aside from the opportunity to view a specific performance, there were many additional attractions at the public playhouses. Most of the theaters were surrounded by decorative gardens, pleasant for walking during clement weather (the Rose Playhouse acquired its name because it was built on a rose garden), and adjoining the playhouse was a tap-house where spectators (and others) could eat and drink. Doubtless various kinds of assignations took place within the playhouse environment; theaters provided a space in which one could both meet others and “be seen.” Some evidence suggests that the audience was far from static; there was a fair amount of movement in and out of the arena and galleries while the performance was in progress. Also, the spectators of the public playhouses took on a more interactive role with the actors than do most modern spectators. The famous “nut-cracking Elizabethans” shouted out comments, responded to wisecracks with jokes of their own, and occasionally heckled the performers. Finally, while the spectators watched the actors, the actors simultaneously observed their audiences; and regardless of the popular representation of the Elizabethan audiences as a “rabble,” the audiences were full of practiced, sophisticated viewers.

Actors and Oral/Aural Culture

The terminology related to early modern playgoing was filled with words and phrases related to the visual elements of dramatic production, what early spectators would have termed “gazing.” However, while the experience of watching a play included everything from the painted backdrops to the props and costumes, it was primarily an aural world created by poetry. Spectators referred commonly to “hearing a play.” Linguists today identify the language of the time as “early modern English,” but the acoustical dimension of the theater was more complicated than this label implies. In part, this is because early modern spectators lived in a different acoustical world than our own. Moreover, they construed what they heard differently than we do now.

Social historians note that Marlowe's contemporaries were well attuned to everyday sounds; however they were also accustomed to a different set of sounds than Londoners hear today. The soundscape of early modern London was characterized by church bells, the clatter of rolling carts, and the piercing street-cries of hawkers. Owing to the fact that London was a port city overflowing with mercantile activity, multiple speech communities and dialects coexisted, represented both by immigrants who had moved to the city from elsewhere in the British Isles and foreigners from the Continent who spoke languages other than English.

While the actual voices of early modern actors have been lost to us and the exact sound of the texts is sometimes debated, two players were distinguished especially for their rhetorical talents. The first of these was Edward Alleyn, who played the larger-than-life roles such as Faustus and Tamburlaine the Great in Christopher Marlowe's plays. His "strutting and bellowing," coupled with a strong beautiful speaking voice, created the charismatic presence for which he was famous. The second orally gifted actor – one largely unknown today – was Andrew Cane, who belonged to the generation of performers who followed Alleyn's fellows. Cane, who spoke rapidly and lyrically, was said to possess "the tongue of Mercury," although little else is known about him. Unfortunately, despite the fact that poetry was so central to theatrical experience, few voice types or styles of delivery were preserved by contemporary observers in any way that allows us to imagine exactly how even the best-known actors sounded.

Regardless of this void, the large public playhouses were constructed to maximize the spectators' aural experience in four ways. First, most of the theaters were constructed on the modest scale of the Rose and the Fortune – that is, the "typical Elizabethan" polygonal playhouses with a diameter of around seventy feet. A building of this size accommodated well the natural range of the human voice. Second, the polygonal shape of most public playhouses was conducive to the distribution of sound throughout the arena, although the actors probably shifted their position on stage frequently in order to be seen better by spectators and to project sound around the playhouse. Third, the building materials (including large wooden beams, and plaster-over-lath surfaces) returned a large proportion of the sound waves that struck them. Fourth, the stage area acted as a sounding board, with the sound waves reflecting off the underside of the canopy that projected part way onto the platform from the back of the stage wall. (For this reason, the musicians' gallery was located near the stage in order to distribute sound to the audience; trumpet calls could have been played from the front of the arena, from the stage, or from the gallery above.) Lastly, we must not forget that there were fewer overwhelming noises in London in the 1590s, either on land or coming from the river, than there are now.

Acting Styles, Training, Rehearsal

The space in which actors performed offered a greater number of theatrical possibilities than the modern proscenium arch theater. Because the public playhouses were so much smaller than most of our contemporary theaters, and also because the actors stood close to the spectators, the actors shared an intimate relationship with the audience.

Historians have differed in their assessment of how actors would have behaved on stage. Some of the earliest scholars, largely in deference to the power of Marlowe's verse, have imagined that any gesture or movement would have been secondary to the oral dimensions of the performance. Others, taking the cue that Alleyn "strutted and bellowed" quite literally, have hypothesized that he performed in an exaggerated, highly mannered way, employing stereotypical gestures

and stock poses. Thus, they conclude, Alleyn would have looked somewhat cartoonish. However, such characterizations fail to take into account that lead actors performed a variety of roles, and that within any major role, whether it was Tamburlaine the Great or Tamer Cam (another conquering hero played by Alleyn), there was certainly room for subtle variation in performance. The common comparison between the best actors of the period and Proteus (the classical shape-shifting god) suggests that the best actors were gifted with versatility, even as they became well known for the portrayal of specific roles.

Fortunately, some general elements relating to acting are verifiable. For instance, the principal actors in a company seem to have played the roles with the greatest number of lines, and the lead actors (who occupied the stage for much of the time) tended to play only one character. Yet not all of the lead actors necessarily performed in every play within a company's repertory – supporting actors divided up the secondary and tertiary roles, not only doubling and tripling but performing all of the mute roles. In terms of the numbers of actors required to mount a performance, there is interesting evidence from the period 1594–7 indicating that the eight actors who comprised the Lord Admiral's Men (Edward Alleyn, John Singer, Richard Jones, Thomas Towne, Martin Slater, Edward Juby, Thomas Downton, and James Donstone) regularly performed plays, such as *The Jew of Malta*, in which there were well over seventeen male roles, or *Tamberlaine the Great, Part 1*, in which there are over twenty-eight roles. In general, such arrangements seem to have remained conventional in the period between the early 1590s and the 1640s. Some playing companies employed twelve adult shareholders; but smaller groups could employ other options, either cutting out a few roles to bring a text into line with the number of players available, or occasionally hiring extra players to perform minor roles.

Another theory that can be advanced with some certainty is that actors performed in many plays within a repertory and that the repertories of some companies – for example, the Lord Admiral's Men (1594–1603), Alleyn's company – mounted fifteen or more plays during a single performance season. Therefore the actors were quick to learn their lines, able to remember them over a period of time, and capable of improvising convincingly when necessary. As a result, the actors probably incorporated some stereotypical gestures, movements, and even blocking in order to get them through a performance. It has been thought that perhaps John Bulwer's *Chirologia, or the Naturall Language of the Hand* (1644), a manual written to help the deaf communicate, might contain some of the standard gestures that actors (or persons in society more generally) employed. Certainly "gestural phrases" (such as "what is that noise?" accompanied by a hand cupped to the ear) are common in dramatic texts.

Conventional terminology of the period describes actors as "personating," "imitating" and "counterfeiting," rather than "performing" in the modern sense. It is as if an actor was essentially presenting a recognizably false but convincing front when he inhabited a role, not that an audience expected or witnessed what we would term "realism" on the stage. Today's audiences are accustomed to the extreme intimacy of film as a medium. But in "holding the mirror up to Nature" – the phrase with which writers of Marlowe's time described the creative process – they seem to have been expecting the "personating" or "representing" of life, rather than "becoming a character." Clearly the most adept actors walked a fine line between the two states. And while a particular actor might have immortalized a role, even the best-known parts were performable by other actors in the company. *Doctor Faustus* was in repertory for many decades after Edward Alleyn retired from the stage.

Finally, implicit in all discussions regarding the players' style is one persistent question: what was the quality of performances at the Rose or the Red Bull? For many reasons it would appear

that players were both well trained and endowed with abundant natural talent. To begin with, it was difficult to acquire a position in a London playing company. The companies were few in number and their full-time shareholder positions were limited to ten or twelve. Actors were expected to bring with them skill and a substantial sum of money (early on, £50, and later on, much more) with which they would purchase a share in the company they joined. The artistic competition appears to have been stiff as well. The London companies performed not only for the general public, but they regularly entertained at Court before aristocratic audiences.

Other obscure areas of inquiry include the players' origins and training. In some cases boys were apprenticed to master players within established companies, and a few of the adult players seem to have been educating boys. Surprisingly perhaps, few boys made a career as adult professionals, and the vast majority of adult actors apparently joined the companies without credentials that we can identify from extant historical records. Of course, the cathedral schools – such as St. Paul's – offered some young men theatrical experience that potentially carried into later life. Nevertheless, the first school established to train players was not founded until the Restoration, when a small academy was started on the site of the First and Second Fortune Playhouses, located north of London Wall, not far from the current Barbican Centre.

Regarding the actual preparation for performance, it is unclear how much time was devoted to a formal rehearsal with all members of the cast present. Most historians conjecture that productions were put together at breakneck speed, owing to the large number of plays within a repertory, if that recorded for the Lord Admiral's Men (as noted in Henslowe's account book) was typical for other companies. While preparing for any run-through, actors worked from small parchment rolls called "sides," which recorded only the lines of a single character. Actors must have spent some private time memorizing lines and, presumably, masters rehearsed their apprentices. The company probably came together to work through the text in the morning hours previous to afternoon performances. Some slight bits of evidence suggest that the actors used the evening hours for informal readings and meetings with dramatists.

Because only one copy of the completed play-text was prepared (this was a matter of expense), some historians find evidence that a "book-keeper" or "book-holder" (perhaps one of the players) literally held the book during rehearsal, occasionally scribbling in production notes and recording which actor would read a minor part; however, early dramatic manuscripts (where they do exist, in small numbers) are nowhere as complete as modern prompt-books. Nor do they necessarily represent a particular production. (Some plays were performed at various times over a long period, or retired occasionally and then revived at a later date, all using the same book.) Playwrights entered the process in many different ways. It seems to have been customary for a writer to talk through an idea for a play with a company before he began to compose it. Once he entered the writing stage, he submitted the text in parts, as each was completed, and the authors were paid per section. Some writers were, it seems, present during rehearsals; however, once the play was handed over to a company and paid for, it was theoretically the property of the company; the texts could be altered by actors or other paid dramatists without the author's permission. Nonetheless, the places in dramatic texts where the theatrical process seems to be reflected are not necessarily accurate representations of actual practice.

How actors worked together continues to invite fascinating conjecture (see Don Weingust, Chapter 19 in this collection). Most recently, elements of modern cognition theory have been applied to the idea of the theatrical environment as a workplace. Evelyn Tribble (2011) has used such models to reimagine how stage directions functioned, how the actors directed attention onstage, and what she calls the "pragmatics of space" and the "physiological mechanisms that

link the actor and the spectator.” Such “cognitive ecology” meant that some training could take place within the actual performances, she thinks, as actors learned from the inside what each text demanded of them. In this way, Tribble emphasizes, the play production was an even more dynamic system than previously imagined.

Celebrated Actors

The early modern period was the first era in which celebrity actors flourished in England and the first in which acting became a full-time profession, but the actors’ experiences as professionals could not have been uniform. At least three “generations” of players performed during the period between 1590 and the 1640s, after which the playhouses were closed by puritanical opponents. The first generation of players was distinguished by the talent of Edward Alleyn, who performed with three companies: Worcester’s Men, the Lord Admiral’s Men, and later, the Prince’s Men. During the 1580s, when Alleyn’s career began, the actors enjoyed the permanence of purpose-built playhouses, but they also inherited the experience of their predecessors, who led a more peripatetic existence, performing in London inn-yards and throughout the countryside in town halls and great houses. As might be imagined, the construction of the theaters – which began technically in 1567 when the Red Lion Inn was converted into a playing space, but became a more active trend after 1576 with the construction of the Theater (1576), the Rose (1587), and the Swan (1595) – offered dramatists and actors a more permanent sense of performance space. It also assisted the companies in cultivating a returning audience who knew where to find them, what kinds of plays were performed at particular venues, and what particular roles featured certain actors. In turn, the players could exact a fee from every spectator, and, during periods of plague closure, the companies could go on tour (where they advertised themselves to a different audience). Ultimately, all these factors guaranteed the companies a comfortable and controlled performance environment, as well as a more substantial income than their predecessors.

This professional stability – stemming from a combination of increased wealth and regular performance – was instrumental in supporting the repertory system. Not least of all it potentially helped create more cohesion in company membership. Master players tended to stay with a particular company, as did many dramatists, and specific parts were written for particular actors. Formal patents, granted by prominent noblemen, allowed the actors to perform in their London playhouses and to go on tour. Thus, the first generations of players turned playing into a formidable and a potentially lucrative profession, despite the fact that they did not enjoy the same secure professional footing as the London trade companies (including the musicians who had enjoyed the status and security of guild membership since the thirteenth century).

The second generation of actors, performing after 1603 (the death of Elizabeth I), was constituted, in part, from the first, but they saw one substantial change: the three major companies were patronized by members of the royal family rather than various noblemen. (Queen Anne, the wife of King James VI who ascended the throne following Elizabeth, was personally interested in theatrical performance and it was for her that most of the extravagant Court masques were staged.) Consequently, the Lord Admiral’s Men (in which Alleyn was still involved) became known as Prince Henry’s Men, being patronized by the King’s oldest son and the next in line to the throne. By happy coincidence, this second generation also witnessed the construction of a new generation of public playhouses too – most notably, for the Admiral’s Men, the First Fortune (1600). Not only constructed with up-to-date features (such as machinery in the heavens), but

improved in all ways by the players' and owners' practical experience, these theaters attracted considerable excitement. Hence, the second generation of players enjoyed a relatively sedate existence, professionally and economically.

The third generation of players came into prominence around 1615, by which time the first generation of players had mostly retired from acting or had died, and a different group of actors and playwrights had become established. These men were well acclimated to the smaller, private playhouses that had become fashionable, and Alleyn (who had retired from the stage but was prominent as a theatre entrepreneur) attempted to construct a small private theatre at Puddle Wharf, near to the Blackfriars district. (However, in the end, complaints by the local residents put an end to the project.) Although the period between 1615 and 1640 spanned roughly the same number of years as the previous two generations of actors, the profession seemed to have come full circle in that the actors were faced with problems of change and instability, similar to those that had haunted their predecessors in the 1570s and 1580s. Eventually those who lived long enough saw the sentiments of the Puritans prevail and the playhouses gradually forced to close, many of them destroyed in the process.

A few ancillary events helped to precipitate this decline. During the second decade of the seventeenth century both Queen Anne and Prince Henry died, dealing a substantial blow to the companies who had relied upon their patronage. The new patrons who replaced Anne and Henry were not as illustrious as their predecessors, and King James's tepid attitude toward theatrical performance did little to bolster the players' artistic cause or their professional profile. On a related note, the first quarter of the seventeenth century witnessed substantial loss and transition within the group of seasoned professionals who had built the theater industry. Two owners of major playhouses and a substantial number of sharers in the two major companies died during this period. The influential *Mastership of the Revels* was held by three different men, and the last, Sir Henry Herbert, was interested only in how much money the office could yield. Lastly, the solid economic bases of the playhouses (and thus, of the companies and actors) began to erode. For the first time, shares in companies and theaters could be inherited by nonplayers instead of being customarily passed from actor to actor. In some instances the control of companies began to pass out of the hands of the actors, in the direction of the company's owners, some of whom had little interest in, or experience with, the artistic side of theater.

Against the background of triumph and turmoil experienced by early modern actors, individual players managed to establish theater as a cultural institution and some were much appreciated by audiences. This adulation was expressed frequently in poems, epithets and, occasionally, in portraiture. Other tributes resided in the work of the many fine dramatists of the period who wrote for the public playhouses. Celebrity status – while it lasted – brought with it certain privileges. In economic terms, the lead players were rewarded with sizable fortunes in fluid assets and property. Christopher Beeston (d. 1638) – who began his career as an actor, came to manage Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull, and owned the Cockpit Theatre – amassed a substantial estate, including two houses in Covent Garden, hundreds of pounds in ready money, and shares in an acting company together with costumes and other goods. Alleyn (d. 1626) left three manors and various London properties, including the College of God's Gift at Dulwich, and upwards of £1,200, among other possessions. Even William Bird (alias Bourne, d. 1624), who never gained the professional magnitude of Alleyn or Beeston, left a wainscot cupboard containing various books, together with an ash-colored suit and cloak trimmed with green silk and silver lace. At a time when a schoolmaster might earn £10 per annum, the estates described here indicate that popular actors were often well compensated, and that a career of shareholding,

Court performances, and occasional touring could amount to an income well in excess of what would have been considered average.

Moreover, in personal ways celebrity status brought a combination of privilege and security. In addition to the public exposure and the honor of performing at Court was the simple pleasure of fraternity. Many actors, such as Allyn's colleague Thomas Towne (d. 1612), developed close relationships with each other. Some named their children for fellow actors, intermarried into theatrical families, and remembered their compeers in their wills. Towne bequeathed "unto my very good frends and fellowes" (i.e., fellow players) "three pounds to make them a supper when it shall please them to call for it." George Pulham, who performed with Queen Anne's Men in 1612, bequeathed £5 to Christopher Beeston's son.

Of course, it would be erroneous to conclude that all theatrical associations, whether between players or between actors and their public, were so positive. Scholars, such as Meredith Skura (1993), who have considered the actors' psychology have found evidence that, for some, acting was – then as now – an escape, an attempt to master decay and death, to remodel the most negative aspects of the human condition. To their detractors, players were characterized in derogatory terms, as exhibitionists, jugglers, hustlers, tempters, and even "whores," by which was meant proud beggars who simultaneously were sly procurers of the public's attention.

Clowns and Clowning

While some actors made their mark in the roles of tragic heroes, no playing company could function without at least one adept clown; and many tragic plays of the period incorporated clowns who added comic elements (albeit subdued) to the performance. In *The Defense of Poesy* (1595) Sir Philip Sidney objected to clowns who conversed with kings on the same stage. Nonetheless, dramatists and their audiences seem not to have shared this concern. The clown was an important character in many plays, both on his own representing comic characters and in scenes wherein clowns played off characters of a higher status or those bearing more authority. In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Robin and Rafe, the ostlers who steal Faustus' book to conjure up Mephistopheles (A-text, scene 6), or the unnamed boy, merely called "Clown," who is taken in as Wagner's servant (A-text, scene 4) are only a few examples of the many different kinds of stage clowns whose dramatic importance was much greater than the low status of the characters they portrayed.

Describing a well-known tragedian's performance is often complicated by conflicting evidence and a paucity of material; however, characterizing a clown's performance is even more difficult, largely because their stage roles are only partially documented in dramatic texts. Much of a clown's performance consisted of improvisation – in words, song, and sometimes dance – and some elements of their performance potentially changed throughout a run of performances. Consequently, much of what occurred on stage has been lost to us. Observers' epithets, while occasionally revealing in terms of theatrical biography, rarely answer our most probing questions about the clowns' onstage activities.

Nonetheless, each clown apparently developed his own unique talent and performance tradition. Each had his own special brand of comedy. For some, it was visual, and for others, it was verbal. Some sang and played instruments and performed jigs at the ends of plays. A few of the best-known clowns passed on their artistic mantles to other performers. Additionally, the tradition of clowning developed over generations, with established clowns taking in young men as apprentices, and apprentices adapting older traditions to newer entertainment styles. Audiences of the 1570s

and 1580s flocked to see the legendary Richard Tarlton (who performed with the Queen's Men from its founding in 1583 to his death in 1588) and Robert Wilson (who began his career in the 1570s with the Earl of Leicester's Men, joined the Queen's Men in the 1580s, and who is probably the same man who wrote fourteen plays for the Lord Admiral's Men between 1597 and 1600). Their successors included John Singer, who performed first with Strange's Men and then with the Queen's Men in the 1580s; and Singer later played for almost a decade with the Lord Admiral's Men. Hence, although there was definitely a sense of artistic lineage within companies, the clowns seem to have moved from company to company more freely than did other players.



Figure 15.1 Richard Tarlton, from a drawing by John Scottowe (1588?). © British Library Board (BL Harleian MS 3885, fol. 19).

A drawing of Richard Tarlton, of about 1588 (Figure 15.1) depicts a small, open-faced man in rustic costume tooting on a pipe and concurrently banging on a tabor. (One contemporary described him as being squint-eyed and flat-nosed, his unusual appearance reinforcing his physical humor.) A poem in the right-hand margin notes that “Of all the Jesters in the lande / he bare the praise awaie.” Tarlton’s considerable and wide-ranging abilities – as an improviser, tumbler, composer of ballads, minor dramatist, and an accomplished Master of Fencing – were widely recognized. In 1585 his play *The Seven Deadly Sins* (now lost) was so popular that a second part was written. Numerous jest-books of the time include anecdotes, real or rumored, that are attributed to Tarlton, and another source, Howes’s continuation of Stow’s *Annales*, singles out Tarlton and Wilson as “two rare men,” but adds that Tarlton was “the wonder of his time” for his “pleasant extemporal wit” (Stow 1631, 698).

Robert Wilson’s performances were marked by a style that some found more “academic” than Tarlton’s; his humor was verbally sophisticated and intellectually challenging. Like Tarlton, he was a player of many abilities. His play *Short and Sweet* was described by Thomas Lodge as praiseworthy and “the practice of a good schollar.” Some historians conjecture that he was, as well, the “R. W.” who authored three additional plays – *The Three Ladies of London* (1584), *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1590), and *The Cobbler’s Prophecy* (1594), the latter attributed to “Robert Wilson, Gent.” On stage he was described by Francis Meres as “our wittie Wilson, who, for learning and extemporall witte in this facultie, is without compare or compeere” ([1598] 1938, sig. Oo6).

Like the others, John Singer brought many gifts to the stage. He joined the Queen’s Men in 1583, and he remained with them for at least five years. By 1594 he had joined the Lord Admiral’s Men, where he immediately assumed a significant position, serving as one of the company’s payees for Court performances during the Christmas season of 1594–5. Like Tarlton and Wilson, Singer wrote at least one play (*Singer’s Voluntary*), for which the Admiral’s Men paid him £5 in January 1603. Later, the dramatist Thomas Heywood, who wrote plays for the Lord Admiral’s Men, honored Singer in his *Apology for Actors* (written after August 1608) along with other players whose “deserts yet live in the remembrance of many” ([1612] 1966, 43).

Impersonating Women

Few theatrical conventions intrigue and confuse modern readers as much as the concept of the boy actor who performed female roles. Furthermore, with few eyewitness accounts to shed light on this historical phenomenon and few modern analogues (outside of Japanese kabuki theater) there is some real possibility that the scholarly controversies will be ongoing. The common use of boy players in early modern companies in England touches historical, theoretical, and practical matters. Theoretical questions include “Why did English culture resist the use of women on the public stage?” and “What sociosexual elements were invoked in the performance of women’s roles by boys?” More pragmatic are questions relating to how boy players functioned in particular roles and how spectators responded to them. Although Michael Shapiro has written a comprehensive chapter in this collection entitled “Boy Companies and Private Theaters,” I would like to glance at a few performance-related issues.

On a practical level, theater historians recognize that from 1558 on, companies of boy players performed regularly at Court and in London, although they fell in and out of fashion at various times. In such instances, the boys performed all of the roles in a play, including the female parts,

a situation that some people might well have found more acceptable than a mixed adult–child cast. Like adult players, boys in child companies utilized a range of performance styles suitable to the roles they performed, and they were capable of dealing with sophisticated rhetorical locutions. Biographical information, while slight, suggests that “boys” could well have been older than what we today would define as “boyhood.” Still, some historians speculate that perhaps, owing to slower maturation (prompted by a combination of social convention, physiological development, and even perhaps factors such as diet), “boys” probably retained their child-like voices later into their teen years than they do in the twenty-first century. In some ways the establishment of the boys’ companies – which performed in small, indoor playhouses – presented a different oral palette than that of adult players.

Nonetheless, although the boy and youth actors were well trained, they must have brought some natural limitations to performance. Possibly this – in combination with concerns about social propriety – is one reason as to why, in performance with adult actors, contact between the male and female characters seems to have been limited, at least judging from what evidence exists in printed texts. Actual displays of passion (kissing, specifically) are minimal; or, at least, the cues for kissing in stage directions are minimal. To cite one interesting example, in Part 1 of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great*, the protagonist is, from the beginning, completely enamored of Zenocrate, the daughter of the Soldan of Egypt who is initially his captive and later his wife; but at the end of Part 1 of the play, even as Tamburlaine and Zenocrate go off to be married, he has not kissed her. The same also might be true in Part 2 of the play, following the nuptials. When Zenocrate, on her deathbed, remarks, “Yet let me kiss my lord before I die / And let me die with kissing on my lord” (2.4.69–70), she is merely stating her desire, but there is no indication that the couple actually kiss one another. Similar circumstances seem to pertain in *Doctor Faustus*, although the play is devoid of romance. When Faustus asks for a wife and Mephistopheles presents him with “a hot whore” (A-text, 5.146) there is no physical interaction between the characters. However, when he is later shown Helen of Troy, “the face that launched a thousand ships,” he boldly invites her to kiss him: “Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss: / Her lips sucks forth my soul, see where it flies!” (A-text, 12.89, 91–2). Still, even here, the “kiss” need not be real; it could easily be faked, and a quick look at a variety of dramatic texts will verify that many such examples of the “almost kiss” exist in plays of the period.

Of course, historians speculate that some strong adult female roles, or female characters of advanced age (who are sometimes the subjects of comedy), might well have been played by adult male actors. Older actors would bring not only more substantial physicality and stronger, deeper voices to these kinds of roles, but they would bring out the comic edge of a role, the costume perhaps looking a bit silly on an older man. If it is the case, as some scholars conclude, that male sexuality was not totally masked but was meant to cut through the feminine attributes of some characters, the result would be that, at times, the kind of gender confusion that would emerge from the boy/youth in female clothing was, in performance, a complex mixture of stereotypical attributes. Thus, some female characters potentially gained power through the undertone of male resonance, while others could have been undercut by the same process.

Regardless of the controversy surrounding the boy actors – in early times and in our own – and despite our limited sense of their stage presence, what is certainly true is that spectators were intrigued by boy players and many must have been affected deeply by their performances. When *Tamburlaine the Great, Part 2* was performed by the Lord Admiral’s Men at the Rose Playhouse during the 1590s, the stage direction at the opening of Act 2, scene 4 indicated that the tone was somber because the king’s beloved wife suddenly lay dying: “The arras is drawn, and Zenocrate

lies in her bed of state, Tamburlaine sitting by her, three physicians about her bed, tempering potions." The scene is short, and in a mere 142 lines, the woman who inspired the conqueror to achieve his greatest ambitions is gone, leaving her husband to manage his boundless anguish by threatening heaven and earth. Within this grief-laden atmosphere Tamburlaine first calls upon "Apollo and Cynthia, and the ceaseless lamps / That gently looked upon this loathsome earth" to "deck the heavens / To entertain divine Zenocrate" (2.4.18–20). A few lines on, his distress increasing, he characterizes her as greater than any goddess, a presence giving light to Phoebus and the fixed stars (l. 50), and as possessing "sacred beauty" which had "enchanted heaven" and outshone Helen of Troy (ll. 85–91). Then, moments later, following Zenocrate's actual death, and indicative of her husband's overwhelming grief, he again describes his wife as "divine Zenocrate" (l. 111), adding that she deserves a tomb "as rich as Mausolus'" (l. 132). Although Tamburlaine's language is certainly effusive, the spectators watching the scene must have been able to relate well enough to the boy actor playing Zenocrate in order for the scene to have its intended effect. The audience must have understood why the king believes that had Zenocrate lived before the siege of Troy, her loveliness would have trumped all other women and served as "the argument / Of every epigram or elegy" (ll. 94–5).

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Playhouses

David Kathman

Introduction

The plays of William Shakespeare and his contemporaries were originally performed in playhouses of a type that had only come into existence within Shakespeare's lifetime. Plays had been performed in the British Isles for hundreds of years before Shakespeare, and professional playing already enjoyed a long history there. Commercial playing, in which players advertised to the general public and charged admission, had blossomed in London starting in the 1540s, but it was originally done in spaces designed for other purposes, such as livery company halls or inn-yards (Kathman 2009c). Only in the last quarter of the sixteenth century did professional playing in London become popular enough that some entrepreneurs began investing serious amounts of capital in buildings and other spaces designed specifically for the performance of plays.

The playhouses that emerged starting in the mid-1570s were of two main types: indoor ("private") and outdoor ("public"). Indoor playhouses were constructed or adapted from rooms of existing buildings, and were relatively small and exclusive, targeted at an upper-class clientele who could afford to pay premium prices. At least initially, they were used by all-boy companies of choristers, who had been popular at Court for many years, and who began performing for paying customers as "rehearsals" for future performances before the monarch. Indoor playhouses typically had a stage lit by candlelight, a "pit" with audience seating close to the stage, and raised galleries around the sides, much as in modern reconstructions such as the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia, and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in London.

Outdoor playhouses were much larger, but the actors and spectators were exposed to the elements. Because they could hold so many more people than indoor playhouses, they could charge lower prices, and thus were frequented by all social classes. Some were adapted from existing buildings and square or rectangular in shape, while others were freestanding and multisided, almost circular. Their stages jutted out into open unroofed yards where audience members

(“groundlings”) stood; surrounding the yard were roofed galleries, typically three levels, where audience members stood or sat on benches. Someone entering an outdoor playhouse first paid a penny to gain admission to the yard; those who wanted to sit paid an additional penny to enter the galleries; and those who paid a third penny could enter the most exclusive part of the galleries. Since several outdoor playhouses were freestanding buildings, mostly in suburban areas north and south of the heavily built city of London, some foundations and other physical traces have survived to the present day. The remains of the Rose and Globe playhouses, discovered in 1989, helped inform the design of the nearby Shakespeare’s Globe in Southwark, the most prominent modern reconstruction of an early modern outdoor playhouse.

Between 1575 and 1642, when plays were banned at the outbreak of the English Civil War, twelve outdoor playhouses and six indoor ones were built in London and its suburbs, and four inns were adapted for use as part-time playhouses while continuing to function as inns. (Two of the outdoor playhouses, the Boar’s Head and the Red Bull, were former inns that ceased operating as inns when they were converted into playhouses, while the Curtain may have used parts of existing buildings.) While these venues had numerous similarities, as described above, each was unique in its own way, and the circumstances under which they were built varied considerably.

1567

The first custom-made playhouse in England was actually built in 1567, nearly a decade before the burst of activity in the mid-1570s. Today known as the Red Lion, it was built in the yard of a farmhouse of that name in Whitechapel, an eastern suburb of London, near the open fields at Mile End where Londoners went for recreation. The Red Lion was financed by John Brayne, a London grocer who would later help build the Theatre, though he only spent about £15 on the Red Lion (as opposed to £700 on the Theatre). In June 1567 Brayne hired one carpenter, William Sylvester, to build scaffolding for spectators, and another carpenter, John Reynolds, to build a stage by July 8 so that a play called *The Story of Samson* could be performed there. He complained to the Carpenters’ Company about Sylvester’s workmanship, and a later lawsuit against Reynolds tells us a good deal about the Red Lion’s stage. It was five feet high, forty feet by thirty feet, with an unboarded space, perhaps for a trap door; there was also a turret rising thirty feet from the ground, with a floor seven feet under the top and four compass braces, perhaps to make an onion dome. Brayne apparently meant the Red Lion for more than the performance of one play, but it does not appear to have been successful, and was probably abandoned by 1569 (Bowsher 2012, 50–2; Ingram 1992, 102–13).

1575–1578

After an eight-year hiatus following the Red Lion experiment, an unprecedented burst of playhouse building transformed the London theatrical scene between 1575 and 1578. No fewer than nine new playhouses sprang up in and around the city in that time, ranging from the tiny indoor space at St. Paul’s to the large and expensive Theatre. Nothing of the sort had ever happened before, and it would be centuries before so many playhouses were again in use in London at one time. All this activity came amid a surge in the popularity of commercial plays, and followed a series of attempts by the London authorities to control this playing more closely, most notably a

late 1574 Act of Common Council that required anyone hosting plays within the city to register and pay licensing fees. These restrictions were almost certainly one reason why several theatrical entrepreneurs soon built outdoor playhouses in the suburbs, where they would be less subject to London regulations, though the lower cost of suburban land was undoubtedly also a factor. But the London authorities did not expel players from the city altogether in 1574; six playhouses opened within the city of London in 1575–8, including four inns whose proprietors complied with the new regulations.

The earliest of these four inn-playhouses to appear in the theatrical record was the Bell Savage on Ludgate Hill, a short walk west of St. Paul's, which was hosting plays by 1575 under innkeeper William Howson (Berry 2006). The Bell Savage had two large yards, one of which was probably used for plays, and it regularly hosted fencing matches. Another of the inn-playhouses, the Bull on Bishopsgate Street in the northeast part of the city, also hosted fencing matches and had a similarly large footprint with three yards, one of which had only one entrance and was probably where plays were performed. The Bull's innkeeper in the 1570s was Matthew Harrison, who in early 1574 (shortly before the Bull began hosting fencing prizes and plays), borrowed the substantial sum of £100, perhaps for a stage or other renovations. The other two inn-playhouses were the Bell and the Cross Keys, adjacent to each other on Gracechurch Street, in the eastern part of the city. Neither ever hosted fencing matches, and each had only a single, relatively small yard, suggesting that plays were performed indoors in a hall (Kathman 2009b). The Bell's innkeeper during its entire time as a playhouse (from the mid-1570s to the mid-1590s) was Henry Haughton, an active member of the Saddlers' Company; the Cross Keys had four different innkeepers over the same period, starting with Richard Ibbotson and ending with James Beare, a former pirate who took over in 1591 (Kathman 2009a).

Two small indoor playhouses also opened in the mid-1570s. The first of these was attached to St. Paul's Cathedral and was open by 1575 under the direction of Sebastian Westcott, master of choristers for the cathedral, who had led the choristers in theatrical performances at Court from the 1550s onward. The playhouse was apparently on an upper floor in the almonry, which adjoined the south wall of the cathedral nave, just west of the wall around the chapter house. Contemporaries described the stage as small; the room may have been about twenty-nine feet wide but was much longer than that. After Westcott's death in 1582, the boys continued acting under their new master, Thomas Giles, but the playhouse was shut down in 1590 or 1591. It would reopen within a decade.

The second indoor playhouse was the work of another musician, Richard Farrant, master of the boy choristers of Windsor Castle and deputy master of the choristers of the Chapel Royal. In August 1576, Farrant leased rooms in two adjoining buildings in the former Blackfriars monastery in the southwest corner of London. He told the landlord that he would be rehearsing the choristers in this space, but did not mention that they would be "rehearsing" plays before paying spectators. This playhouse, which opened in the winter of 1576–7, was at the south end of the upper floor of the old buttery, in two rooms that Farrant made into one, measuring twenty-six feet east to west and forty-six feet six inches north to south. The playhouse continued in use until the spring of 1584, when the landlord reclaimed the lease because Farrant had lied about his intentions and he and his successors had not observed the terms of the lease.

Three outdoor playhouses were also built in the suburbs of London in 1575–7, and these were more innovative (and expensive) than the other six described above. The best known and best documented of these was the Theatre, built by James Burbage, a former joiner who was one of the Earl of Leicester's players, and his brother-in-law John Brayne, who had built the Red

Lion in 1567. In April 1576 Burbage took out a twenty-one year lease on part of the dissolved Priory of Holywell in Shoreditch, a suburb northeast of the city, and built the Theatre about twenty yards east of the western “curtain” wall of the priory grounds, along which Curtain Road now runs. It was a timber-framed building that seemed round but which actually had fourteen sides, as archaeological excavations between 2008 and 2011 revealed (Bowsher 2012, 55–62). Those excavations, while limited, suggested that the building was about seventy-two feet across. It had three galleries surrounding the yard, one above the other, with the bottom one being twelve feet six inches deep and the top one covered by a tile roof. The stage does not appear to have had a roof.

To finance the estimated £200 cost of building the Theatre, James Burbage took on Brayne as his partner. Burbage promised to add Brayne’s name to the lease, and Brayne would supply most of the money; profits from the playhouse would go mostly to Brayne until the two men’s expenditures were the same, after which they would be equal partners. This plan proved hopelessly inadequate because Burbage and Brayne could never agree on the financial details, plus the playhouse ended up costing £700 rather than £200. As a result, the Theatre struggled in its early years and was plagued by lawsuits, although the upside is that these suits provide invaluable details about its history. Brayne died bankrupt in 1586, and Burbage squeezed Brayne’s widow out of ownership in 1589. James Burbage died in February 1597, shortly before the Theatre’s lease expired, and his sons Richard (the leading actor of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men) and Cuthbert were unable to agree on an extension with landlord Giles Allen. The Theatre ceased operations in 1598, but its timbers were subsequently used in the construction of the Globe, discussed below.

Soon after the Theatre opened, another outdoor playhouse was built about two hundred yards to the south. It was also in Shoreditch just east of what is now Curtain Road, but it was eighty yards south of Holywell Lane, which formed the southern boundary of the Holywell Priory grounds. This playhouse was called the Curtain, not in a theatrical sense (since modern stage curtains did not yet exist at the time), but because it was built in a former meadow called Curtain Close, named for its proximity to the priory’s curtain wall. The Curtain playhouse was open by 1577, and was frequently paired with the Theatre as representative of all public playhouses. Archaeological excavations in 2016 unexpectedly showed that, unlike the polygonal Theatre, the Curtain was rectangular in shape and quite a bit larger than its neighbor, roughly eighty-two by eighty-nine feet. The building may have reused some walls of existing structures, and apparently had a wide, shallow stage; archaeologists uncovered the sloping gravel surface of the yard, and brick walls up to one and a half meters high. We do not know for certain who built the Curtain, but it may have been Henry Lanman, a yeoman of the Queen’s guard and minor courtier who made an agreement with Burbage and Brayne in 1585 to pool and share equally the profits of the Theatre and the Curtain for seven years. After 1592, ownership shares in the Curtain were owned by numerous players, and the playhouse was in regular theatrical use into the 1620s, nearly fifty years after it was built, making it the longest lived early modern playhouse.

The third outdoor playhouse of the 1570s had no proper name that we know of, but it is today known as Newington Butts, after the village in Surrey where it was built, a mile south of London Bridge. It was located directly east of what later became Walworth Road, at the junction where the roads to Camberwell and Clapham met the road going north to London, on part of a ten-acre plot known as Lurklane. The site is now under part of the Elephant and Castle roundabout, so no archaeological investigation has been possible (Bowsher 2012, 231). The playhouse was built by

Jerome Savage, an actor who led the Earl of Warwick's Men, probably in the spring of 1576, but possibly a little earlier or later. Savage sublet the property from Richard Hickes starting in March 1576, and Warwick's Men, first noticed in London in February 1575, occupied the playhouse by at least May 1577. Hickes and his son-in-law Peter Hunningborne soon tried unsuccessfully to evict Savage, leading to lawsuits that reveal much about the property's ownership history but little about its physical features. The playhouse remained in use into the 1590s, hosting Lord Strange's Men in 1593 and the Lord Chamberlain's and Lord Admiral's Men together for ten days in 1594, but it appears to have ceased operations soon after that (Ingram 1992, 150–81).

1587, 1594

Following this great burst of activity in the 1570s, no new playhouses opened in London for more than a decade. The person who ended this drought was Philip Henslowe, who trained as a dyer but acted as a financier with a hand in many different business ventures. Along with his stepson-in-law Edward Alleyn, the famous actor who led the Lord Admiral's Men, Henslowe was a major player in the London theater for nearly thirty years; his "diary" (actually an account book) and the accompanying papers provide most of what we know about the business practices of playing companies and theatrical entrepreneurs (see Foakes 2002). He also created a new theater district, for his Rose was the first of five outdoor playhouses to be built on Bankside, south of the Thames and west of London Bridge, an area known for its brothels, gambling dens, and other illicit entertainments.

In 1585, Henslowe leased a plot called the Little Rose on Bankside, and subsequently hired carpenter John Griggs to build the playhouse. To help finance the project, on January 10, 1587, Henslowe drew up a deed of partnership with John Cholmley, a recent freeman of the London Grocers' Company who lived in Bletchingley, Surrey. The deed said that Cholmley could sell food and drink to spectators from a building on the southwest corner of the property for eight years, if he paid Henslowe a huge rent of £102 a year and joined as an equal partner in the costs and profits of the playhouse. The playhouse opened by the end of 1587, but Cholmley died less than two years later and was buried in Bletchingley on May 1, 1589, after which Henslowe was the sole owner of the Rose (Ingram 2012). For most of the playhouse's history, Edward Alleyn's company was its main tenant, but after they moved to the Fortune in 1600 it was briefly occupied by Worcester's Men. Henslowe did not reopen the Rose after the horrendous plague of 1603–4, nor did he renew his lease on the property in 1605.

In 1989, the foundations of the Rose were found by archaeologists investigating the site of a planned office building. The subsequent archaeological investigations provided a wealth of information about the playhouse, complementing and clarifying the information in the Henslowe-Alleyn papers (Bowsher and Miller 2009, 32–76; Bowsher 2012, 68–80). In its original 1587 form, the Rose was very similar in size and shape to the Theatre, being a fourteen-sided timber-framed building about seventy-two feet across, with three levels of galleries about twelve feet deep at ground level, and a central yard about forty-eight feet across, sloped toward the stage. The entrance to the playhouse was from the south, with the stage jutting out into the north part of the yard and an entrance ("ingressus") from the yard to the galleries on the west side. The stage was an irregularly shaped trapezoid, about twenty-six feet wide at the front and thirty-eight feet wide at its widest point, with no roof. In 1592 Henslowe extensively renovated

the Rose, documenting the costs (totaling over £100) in his *Diary*. The stage was moved six feet six inches northward and made more rectangular in shape, and a roof supported by two pillars was added. The north half of the galleries were moved and elongated to allow an unimpeded view of the stage from the upper galleries, giving the building more of an oblong shape. The yard also got a new surface and was made more level, probably to ease drainage problems resulting from the old sloped yard.

In 1594, Francis Langley set out to build a second playhouse on Bankside, the Swan. Langley, like Henslowe, had a hand in many different business and financial ventures, some of dubious legality. When the Swan was completed in 1595 it was the largest and arguably most distinguished of the London playhouses, but it ended up being one of the least successful. This may be because it was located in the manor of Paris Garden, some five hundred yards west of the other Bankside playhouses, significantly farther from London Bridge and the centers of population of the city. The Swan was shut down after the controversial play *The Isle of Dogs* was performed there in July 1597, and two years later Langley turned his attention to the Boar's Head playhouse (see below) until his death in 1602. Regular playing at the Swan resumed in 1610 for a few years, with Lady Elizabeth's Men being one of the tenants, but there is no record of theatrical use after 1621.

Nothing like Henslowe's detailed records of the Rose survives for the Swan, nor are there any archaeological remains, as the site (on the east side of Hopton Street) is now occupied by a 1970s office building with deep and extensive basements (Bowsher 2012, 81). However, we do have one unique record of the Swan: a drawing of its interior made in 1596 by a Dutch tourist, Johannes de Witt, and later copied into a commonplace book (Berry 2000, 437). This drawing (Figure 16.1) has made the Swan our main source of ideas about what other outdoor playhouses looked like, and has significantly influenced modern reconstructions such as Shakespeare's Globe. The drawing shows the Swan as consisting of three tiers of galleries around an open yard, with a rectangular stage extending perhaps halfway into the yard so that spectators can stand on three sides of it, and two pillars holding up a roof over the back part of the stage. Behind the stage is a three-story tiring house built into the galleries; the bottom story has two doors leading onto the stage, the one above that has a window at which spectators apparently sit, and the top story has a door at the right side out of which a man steps, blowing a trumpet. Thatched roofs cover the galleries, tiring house, and stage. According to de Witt, the Swan was larger than the other London playhouses (the Theatre, Curtain, and Rose), and accommodated 3,000 spectators.

1598–1600

The Rose and the Swan were the only new London playhouses to appear in the twenty years after the remarkable building spree of the 1570s, but the late 1590s saw another burst of new playhouse activity. After years of plague-induced turmoil, the London theater enjoyed a period of unprecedented stability and popularity, even as the supply of playhouses had shrunk. The indoor spaces at Blackfriars and St. Paul's had closed years before; the four inn-playhouses and Newington Butts all ceased operations in the mid-1590s; the Theatre eventually ceased operations as well, a year or so after its lease expired in early 1597; and the Swan's future was in doubt after the *Isle of Dogs* debacle. To fill this vacuum, five playhouses opened in a three-year span, four of them new and one reopened.

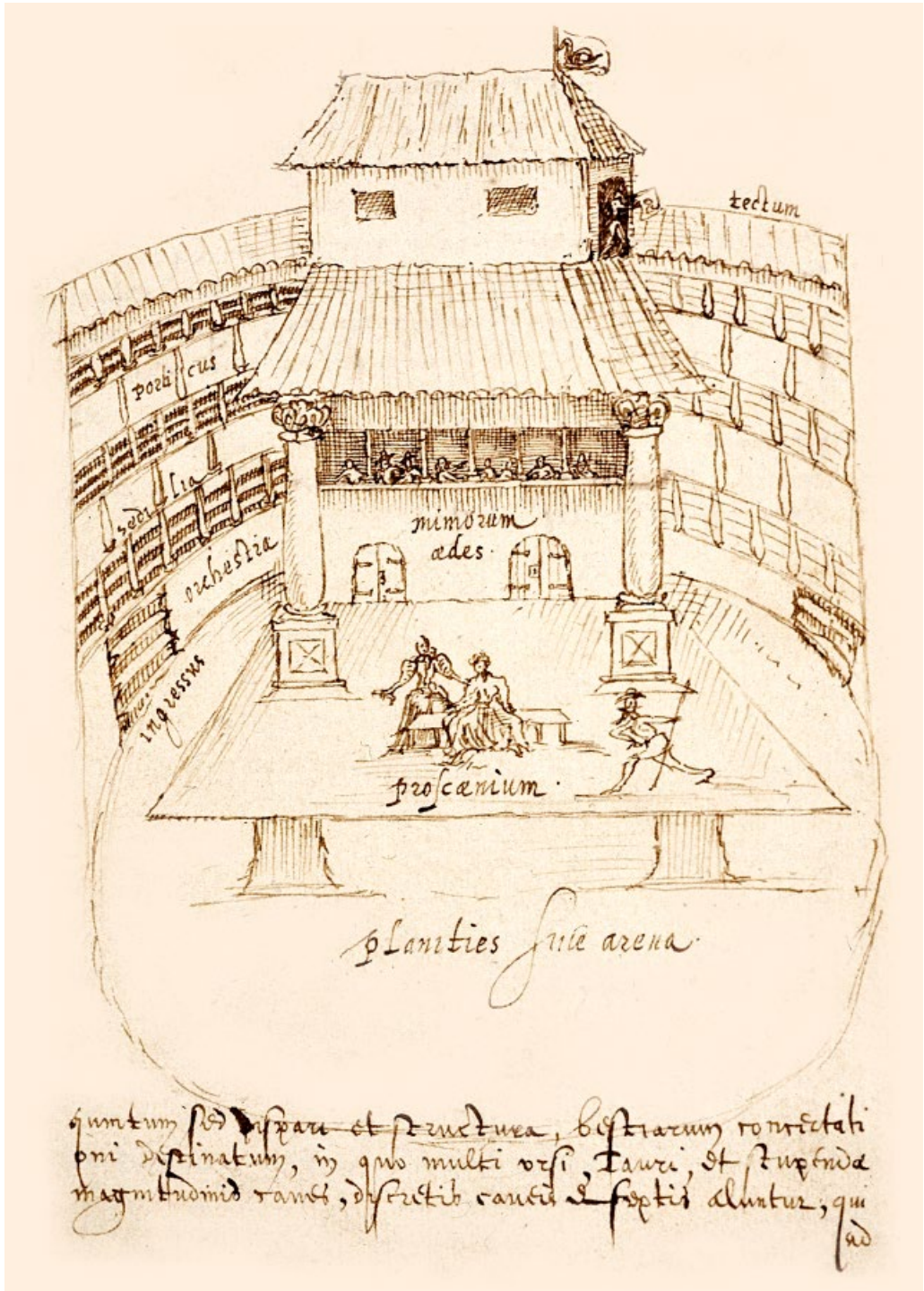


Figure 16.1 Johannes de Witt, illustration of the Swan Theater interior. Reproduced by permission of Utrecht University Library (Ms. 842, fol. 132).

The first new playhouse to open during this period was the Boar's Head, located just beyond the city limits outside Aldgate, on the north side of Whitechapel High Street. The Boar's Head was a converted inn, but unlike the Bell Savage, Bull, Bell, and Cross Keys, it ceased operating as an inn when it was converted into a playhouse. In April 1598, Oliver Woodliffe, who had leased most of the inn four years earlier, partnered with Richard Samwell to create a playhouse in the innyard, which was about fifty-five feet square. Woodliffe paid for a tiring house and gallery on the west side of the yard, and for a stage in the middle; Samwell paid for narrow galleries on the north and south sides, and for adapting the inn's gallery on the east side of the yard. Woodliffe and Samwell would each get half the takings from their respective galleries, while the players would get the other half plus the takings from the yard (Berry 1986).

In summer 1599, after the Boar's Head had been operating for a year, Woodliffe and Samwell made the galleries larger and deeper and moved and expanded the stage, which became thirty-nine feet seven inches wide and twenty-five feet deep. (Samwell spent £260 on this expansion, as opposed to £40 for his part of the original construction.) But both men spent more on the project than expected, and both sold their shares in late 1599: Samwell for £360 to Robert Browne, an actor who led Derby's Men; and Woodliffe for £400 to Francis Langley, the owner of the Swan. Langley promptly initiated a flurry of lawsuits that lasted past his death in 1602, and which provide most of what we know about the playhouse's history. The lawsuits fizzled out after Woodliffe and Browne both died in the plague outbreak of 1603. The playhouse was used by various companies (Derby's, Worcester's/Queen Anne's, Prince Charles's) until the leases expired in 1616, after which the building reverted to other uses. The site is today a vacant lot, and a small archaeological excavation in 1999 revealed nothing useful (Bowsher 2012, 89).

The next new London playhouse to open was the most famous of all: the Globe, built by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who had William Shakespeare as their leading playwright and Richard Burbage as their leading actor. The Globe's origins were closely tied to the fate of its predecessor the Theatre, built by Richard's father James Burbage, and to the origins of its indoor counterpart in Blackfriars.

More than a year before the lease on the Theatre was due to expire in March 1597, with renewal far from certain, James Burbage had decided to make a huge investment in an indoor playhouse in the former Blackfriars monastery. On February 4, 1596, Burbage paid £600 for the medieval hall on the upper floor of a building in Blackfriars, adjoining the building where the earlier (much smaller) Blackfriars playhouse had been. This hall was a majestic space where several Parliaments had met, forty-six feet wide by sixty-six feet long, with high ceilings and a great stone staircase at the north end. To convert the hall into a playhouse, Burbage removed the partitions and subdivisions that had been inserted over the previous fifty years, built galleries and private boxes along the sides, and at the south end added a stage, tiring house, and an upper stage structure with galleries, a balcony, and a musicians' room. However, in November 1596, with the renovation in progress, a group of wealthy and influential Blackfriars residents successfully petitioned the Privy Council to block the space's use as a playhouse. Thus when James Burbage died in February 1597, Richard Burbage and his brother Cuthbert were left cash-poor, with a playhouse they couldn't use. The Chamberlain's Men continued to use the Theatre while trying to negotiate a lease extension with landlord Giles Allen, but those negotiations broke down in early 1598, so the company moved to the Curtain while plotting its next move.

The company solved its problem in ingenious fashion. The Burbages first leased a plot of land on Bankside, south of Maiden Lane and virtually across the street from the Rose. Soon after Christmas 1598, with Giles Allen out of town, they had the Theatre dismantled and its timbers

transported across the Thames to the plot on Bankside, where they were used in the construction of a new playhouse, the Globe. The playhouse was at least partially complete by May 1599, and was certainly open by September. The Burbages helped finance the project by bringing in five members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men as shareholders – William Shakespeare, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, John Heminges, and Will Kempe. These five each contributed £70 toward building costs and together owned half of the Globe, while Richard and Cuthbert Burbage together contributed £350 and owned the other half. This novel ownership structure contributed to the prominence of the Chamberlain's Men (later known as the King's Men), and helped individual company members, including Shakespeare, become wealthy. The first Globe lasted until June 29, 1613, when it burned to the ground during a performance of *Henry VIII*, after which the shareholders rebuilt it within a year in accordance with the terms of the lease.

Archaeologists uncovered a small part of the Globe's remains in 1989, and these have provided some information about its features, although not nearly as much as we have for the Rose (Bowsher and Miller 2009, 89–102; Bowsher 2012, 89–96). The galleries were the same size as those of the Theatre, Curtain, and Rose – twelve and a half feet deep at ground level – but the building itself was larger, either a sixteen-sided polygon eighty-four feet six inches in diameter, or an eighteen-sided polygon ninety-five feet in diameter. (Recall that the Theatre and the Rose had fourteen sides and were about seventy-two feet across.) One way that the Globe was like the Rose, but unlike the Theatre, was in having a thatched roof rather than a tiled one. (It was the thatched roof that would catch fire in 1613.) Since the timbers of the Theatre were reused for the Globe, theater historians assumed for many years that the two buildings were the same size, or even that the Globe was just the Theatre reassembled on a different site, but the excavations have shown that this was not the case.

In the fall of 1599, shortly after the Globe opened, the boy choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral began acting again for paying audiences at their old playhouse. Their master was now Edward Peers, who had replaced the terminally ill Thomas Giles earlier in the year, and who sought to take advantage of the increased demand for plays by the London public. The revived Paul's Boys were a hit, leading the Burbage brothers to conclude that even if the Chamberlain's Men could not use the Blackfriars playhouse, perhaps a company of boys could. On September 2, 1600, they leased the space for twenty-one years to Henry Evans, who had briefly led the earlier Blackfriars boy company just before it was shut down in 1584. Evans teamed up with Nathaniel Giles, master of the choristers of the Chapel Royal, and before the end of the year they were presenting plays in Blackfriars by the revived Children of the Chapel Royal. These boys were also a hit, and for a while the two boy companies were the toast of the London theater world. They are apparently the "little eyases" in *Hamlet* who, Rosencrantz says, "are most tyrannically clapped" and "are now the fashion."

However, the boys' success did not last. The adult management of both companies became embroiled in controversies and lawsuits, with Evans being removed from Blackfriars management in 1602 after he and Giles kidnapped a boy, Thomas Clifton, whose father successfully sued to get the boy back. Both companies, especially the Blackfriars one, also courted controversy with their topical, satirical plays making fun of powerful people. Paul's Boys apparently stopped performing after 1606, and in March 1608 King James shut down the Blackfriars boy company after two of their plays offended people at Court.

The Burbages took this opportunity to get back the Blackfriars playhouse for their company, now the King's Men, correctly assuming that there would be less objection than in 1596. On August 9, 1608, they reacquired Evans' lease, and the next day organized an ownership structure

echoing that of the Globe, with seven partners owning equal shares: Richard Burbage, Cuthbert Burbage, John Heminges, William Shakespeare, William Sly, Henry Condell, and Evans, who presumably got a share as partial compensation for surrendering the lease. The King's Men were probably not able to start playing in Blackfriars for more than a year due to plague closures, but once they did it became the best known and most important playhouse of its time, and one of the most important in the history of English drama. Several of Shakespeare's late plays were likely written with the space in mind. From at least 1616 until the closing of the playhouses in 1642 the King's Men typically used the Blackfriars in the winter and the Globe in the summer. After 1642, the space was never used for plays again. Richard Burbage's son William sold it for £700 in 1651, and the building burned in the Great Fire of 1666.

At around the same time that the second Blackfriars playhouse opened in late 1600, Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn opened a new outdoor playhouse, the Fortune, in Cripplegate, northwest of the city between Golding Lane and Whitecross Street. Alleyn's company, the Admiral's Men, moved there from the Rose, which now faced stiff competition from the Globe on Bankside. Alleyn leased the land on December 22, 1599, and on January 8, 1600, he and Henslowe drew up a contract with builder Peter Street, the same man who had dismantled the Theatre for the Burbages (and probably also built the first Globe). Henslowe oversaw the construction, which was to cost £440, and Alleyn negotiated with objecting neighbors. Alleyn eventually said that the Fortune had cost £520, with some of the extra £80 probably being for painting, which the contract excluded. Street could not finish the building by July 25 as agreed, partly because of complaints by neighbors, but the Admiral's Men were performing there by November 1600. That company, later known as Prince Henry's and Palsgrave's Men, would remain at the Fortune until it burned down on the night of December 9, 1621.

No archaeological investigation of the Fortune has been possible (the site lies under the present-day Fortune Street), but the building contract survives in the Henslowe-Alleyn papers, and provides more reliable information about the structure of this playhouse than we have for any other. The contract specified that the first Fortune was to be a timber-frame building modeled after the Globe, with the major exception that it would be square (eighty feet on each side). There were three levels of galleries; the bottom one was twelve feet six inches deep, the same as in the Theatre, Curtain, Rose, and Globe, but the middle gallery was thirteen feet four inches deep and the top one was fourteen feet two inches deep, so that they jutted out slightly over the yard. The bottom gallery was on a foundation rising a foot or more above the ground and was twelve feet high, the middle gallery was eleven feet high, and the top one was nine feet high. The yard was fifty-five feet square. The stage was twenty-seven feet six inches deep, thus jutting out exactly halfway into the yard, and forty-three feet wide, so that six feet of the yard lay on each side of the stage. Behind the stage was the tiring house, which had glazed windows, and the galleries and stage had tile roofs.

1607, 1614

After the opening of the Blackfriars and Fortune in late 1600, no new playhouses appeared for several years. But when the Rose did not reopen after the plague closure of 1603–4, and the St. Paul's space closed in 1606, new entrepreneurs filled the breach with one outdoor playhouse, the Red Bull, and one indoor playhouse, Whitefriars. Both were open by 1607, maybe a bit earlier.

The Red Bull was a project of Aaron Holland, an innkeeper who was also a servant of the Earl of Devonshire. At Christmas 1604, Holland leased the Red Bull inn, located off St. John's Street in Clerkenwell, roughly a half-mile northwest of the city walls. To convert the inn into a playhouse, Holland teamed up with veteran actor Martin Slater, now a member of Queen Anne's Men, who was supposed to create a new company to occupy the playhouse under the patronage of the Queen's brother, the Duke of Holstein. With the conversion already underway, the Duke left England in disgrace in May 1605, forcing Holland and Slater to revise their plans. Emulating the Globe consortium, they divided the playhouse into shares, some as small as one-eighteenth, and sold them to members of the Queen's Men, including at least Thomas Greene, Christopher Beeston, and Thomas Swinnerton (Griffith 2013, 63–70). No evidence exists that the Red Bull was actually being used until 1607, when the Queen's Men began a decade-long occupation. Various companies used the playhouse until the closing of the theaters in 1642; there were often surreptitious performances there during the Interregnum, and it was used for a few years after the Restoration before finally closing in 1663. For most of its life, the Red Bull had a reputation as a working-class playhouse, in contrast to more exclusive, upper-class venues such as Blackfriars.

As with several of the other playhouses, the Red Bull produced a mountain of contentious litigation that reveals many details about its history and operations. Unfortunately, this litigation does not tell us very much about the playhouse's physical characteristics, but we can glean such information from other sources (Griffith 2013, 93–107). The playhouse was in the inn's yard, in which Holland is said to have "altered some stables and other rooms, being before a square court[yard] in an inn, to turn them into galleries" (Bowsher 2012, 106). A plan of 1679/80 depicts this yard as slightly trapezoidal, fifty-six or fifty-seven feet wide on the north, west, and south sides, and sixty-seven feet wide on the east side, closest to St. John's Street. If the building had these dimension during its time as a playhouse, which is far from certain, the yard would have been bigger than the Fortune's. The same plan depicts the building as made of brick, but it is unclear whether this was true of the original 1605 playhouse. A drawing from the 1660s depicts a tower, perhaps the tiring-house, on the east side of the building, and there must have been some sort of "heavens" from which people and objects could be lowered.

The other playhouse to open in 1606–7 was an indoor one in the former Whitefriars friary, a bit west of the Blackfriars. Its originator was Thomas Woodford, a financier who had once had an interest in St. Paul's and would soon be involved with the Red Bull. At Christmas 1606–7, Woodford subleased part of the Whitefriars complex for eight years and brought in prospective playwright Lording Barry and poet/playwright Michael Drayton as investors, the latter of whom was to organize a boys' company for the playhouse called the Children of the King's Revels. The lease included the "great Hall," which must have been where the playhouse was, as well as numerous other rooms. A plan from 1627 shows that this hall was about seventeen feet wide by ninety feet long with stone walls, two of which were still visible in the 1920s in the basement of a modern building. The playhouse probably had a seating capacity of 170 to 200, with a stage perhaps fifteen feet deep, a curtained discovery space behind it (perhaps eleven feet wide by eight feet deep), and a small "above" or upper platform on top of that (Bowsher 2012, 124).

The playhouse opened in the summer of 1607 but was closed by the plague within a few months, plunging the project into financial turmoil. Woodford tried to reorganize in March 1608 with new investors and by hiring Martin Slater (fresh from the Red Bull venture) to manage the boys, but this plan collapsed a month later when the landlord evicted the company for nonpayment of rent, marking the end of the Children of the King's Revels. Soon after that, the remnants of the former Blackfriars boy company, managed by Robert Keysar, moved to the

Whitefriars playhouse under the name Children of the Queen's Revels. They were more successful, playing there until combining with Lady Elizabeth's Men in 1613. The combined company may have used the Whitefriars for another year until the lease expired in 1614.

Around the same time that the Whitefriars playhouse closed, two new outdoor playhouses opened in London. One of these was the second Globe, which replaced the original Globe and was built on its foundations. The new Globe cost twice as much as the first one to build (£1400 vs. £700), and had at least two significant differences from its predecessor: its roof was tile instead of combustible thatch, and it replaced the cramped internal staircases of the galleries with external stair towers, the foundations of which were discovered in the 1989 archaeological investigation (Bowsher 2012, 92–5). Such a stair tower is visible on the Globe in Wenceslaus Hollar's "Long View" engraving of Southwark, dating to the 1640s. The Globe did not last long after Hollar sketched it for his engraving. All the playhouses were closed in 1642, the players' lease on the land (which they had extended several times) expired at Christmas 1644, and the Globe was probably demolished soon after that.

The other playhouse to open in 1614 was the Hope, the last of five outdoor playing venues to be built on Bankside and the last theatrical project of Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn. In addition to their playhouses, Henslowe and Alleyn had long been involved with the popular but gruesome sport of bearbaiting, in which bears were tied to a stake and attacked by dogs. Since 1594 they had owned the Beargarden, a bearbaiting arena just northwest of the Rose, and on August 29, 1613, Henslowe and Jacob Meade, his partner in the Beargarden, contracted with carpenter Gilbert Katherens to tear down the Beargarden and build the Hope in its place as a combination playhouse/bearbaiting arena with a removable stage. After some delays the Hope opened in 1614, with bearbaiting on Sundays and Thursdays and plays on other days, but the attempt to have both activities in the same space was not successful. When Lady Elizabeth's Men premiered Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* at the Hope on October 31, 1614, Jonson complained that the playhouse was "as durty as Smithfield and as stinking every whit" (Bowsher 2012, 113). Prince Charles's Men also used the Hope for a while after Lady Elizabeth's left, but it was almost exclusively used for bearbaiting after 1620.

The building contract with Katherens, combined with archaeological investigations in 1999–2001 and the Hollar "Long View" engraving, give us some idea of what the Hope was like. Unfortunately, apart from saying that the bottom gallery should be twelve feet high, the contract does not specify the Hope's size or exact shape, merely saying that it should be as large as the Swan. The excavations, much more limited than those for the nearby Rose, suggest a yard roughly fifty-two feet across, slightly larger than that of the Rose, and a building with an external diameter of about eighty-three feet, roughly the lower estimate for the Globe's diameter (Bowsher 2012, 113). The contract specifies that there should be two boxes for gentlemen in the lowermost story and partitions between the rooms, as at the Swan, and that the main building, as well as a new bull house and stable that Katherens was also building, should be roofed in tile. The Hollar engraving shows a cantilevered roof over the stage on the south side of the yard, indicating that the entrance was from the north.

1617, 1623, 1630

After decades in which indoor playhouses were exclusively associated with children's companies, the success of the King's Men at the Blackfriars opened up new possibilities, and caused other adult companies to seek ways of attracting similarly exclusive audiences. The first indoor

playhouse to be used by adult actors from the start, and the first direct competitor to the King's Men at Blackfriars, was known as either the Cockpit (for its previous use as a cockfighting venue) or the Phoenix. It was also the first playhouse to be built in what is now the West End theater district, being located just off Drury Lane, a stone's throw from the present-day Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

The person behind the Cockpit/Phoenix was Christopher Beeston, a longtime member of Queen Anne's Men and an investor in that company's Red Bull playhouse. He subleased the property on August 9, 1616 and converted it into a playhouse despite some opposition from nearby Lincoln's Inn, and Queen Anne's Men had moved in by early 1617. On March 4, 1617, Shrove Tuesday, the new playhouse was destroyed by rioting apprentices, but Beeston quickly rebuilt it, and in rising from the (metaphorical) ashes the playhouse gained the nickname "the Phoenix." When Queen Anne's Men dissolved in 1619, Beeston continued managing the Cockpit/Phoenix for a series of other theatrical tenants over the next twenty years, making it one of the most successful and popular playhouses of the time. After Beeston died in 1638, his son William took over management of the Phoenix until the outbreak of civil war in 1642, except for a brief period when William Davenant ran it. During the Interregnum the Phoenix hosted illegal and semilegal performances, and it was the first playhouse to reopen legally in 1660 before finally closing in 1663.

We know almost nothing for certain about the internal size and shape of the Phoenix. James Wright stated in 1699 that the Blackfriars, Phoenix, and Salisbury Court playhouses had been "almost exactly alike for form and bigness," so the Phoenix was probably rectangular but somewhat smaller than the Blackfriars' forty-six by sixty-six feet. The stage was at the south end, as at the Blackfriars, and analysis of plays performed there suggests that this had three doors with a balcony over it. At least in its latter days, the building was made of brick, and a map from the 1650s shows it as two stories and roughly forty feet square, with three pitched roofs (Bowsher 2012, 128–9; Berry 2000, 623–6).

Six years after the Phoenix, the last of the outdoor playhouses, the second Fortune, opened in early 1623 on the site of the original Fortune, which had burned down a little more than a year earlier. Edward Alleyn financed it by selling twelve shares for £83 6s 8d apiece, for a total building cost of £1,000. Because the Palsgrave's Men (the descendants of the Admiral's Men) had lost all their costumes and playbooks in the fire, they could not afford to pay for the rebuilding, so the shares were bought by outside investors, including several of the builders. Unlike the second Globe, the second Fortune was not built on the foundations of the first; it was round rather than square, and made of brick rather than timber-framed with brick foundations. There were some illegal performances there after the playhouses were closed in 1642, but the second Fortune was dilapidated by 1656 and probably torn down soon after.

Following the long plague closure of 1625–6, only five playhouses remained open, three outdoor (the Globe, Red Bull, and Fortune) and two indoor (the Blackfriars and Phoenix). A third indoor playhouse, Salisbury Court, opened in 1630, the last of the pre-Restoration playhouses and the only one partly a venture of the royal establishment. It was created by veteran actor Richard Gunnell and deputy Master of the Revels William Blagrave. On July 6, 1629, Gunnell and Blagrave leased from the Earl of Dorset a plot of land (forty-two feet by one hundred and forty feet) on the grounds of Dorset House, a few hundred feet from the old Whitefriars playhouse, probably near the corner of present-day Whitefriars Street and Tudor Street. There they spent £1,000 converting a barn into a playhouse and building a house nearby. As with the Phoenix, we know little for certain about the playhouse's size and shape, but it was apparently

made of brick, and in 1660 a forty-by-forty foot room was built above it, suggesting that the playhouse was that size (Bowsher 2012, 131–3).

After plague delays, the Salisbury Court playhouse finally opened in November 1630. Its first occupant was the King's Revels, a new boy company organized by Gunnell and Blagrave, followed by a new adult company, Prince Charles's Men, and later (in 1637) Queen Henrietta Maria's after they moved from the Phoenix. By that time Gunnell and Blagrave were both dead and Richard Heton was running Salisbury Court. After 1642 the playhouse was frequently used for illegal performances, and in 1660 it was restored and officially reopened by William Beeston. However, it burned in the Great Fire of 1666 and was not rebuilt, severing the last link between the first generation of English playhouses and the Restoration theatre, from which today's London theatrical scene directly descends.

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Theatrical License and Censorship

Richard Dutton

December 1624 was a difficult month for Sir Henry Herbert, Master of His Majesty's Revels. He had problems with both of the principal responsibilities of that office, which were sometimes in tension with each other. His primary responsibility was to ensure adequate theatrical entertainment at Court during its midwinter Revels, which were then in progress; in this role he protected the players he employed from competing or hostile authorities. But, growing out of that responsibility, he also licensed all plays and playhouses in public use, censoring their plays in the process. This made him the players' overseer as well as their protector.

That December, Herbert was first alarmed by preparations for war against Spain. Anyone without secure social standing or employment was liable to be impressed into military service, and that could easily mean theatrical folk. There was no threat to the shareholding actors in the main companies since they were Grooms of the Chamber in their respective royal households. But there was a real risk that others, such as their musicians, book-keeper, and other hired men might be rounded up. To protect the preeminent King's Men from this, Herbert issued a certificate naming twenty-two persons who were not "to bee arrested, or deteyned under arrest, imprisoned, Press'd for Souldiers or any other molestacon Whereby they may be hindered from doeing his Maj(esties) service" (Bawcutt 1996, 158–9).

But even as Herbert was protecting the support staff, he faced a more serious threat from the principals of the King's Men. On December 20 he required eleven of them – perhaps all the active players among them at that date – to subscribe to a letter acknowledging their fault in staging a play called *The Spanish Viceroy* without first licensing it with him:

wee doe confess and herby acknowledge that wee have offended, and that it is in your power to punishe this offense, and we are very sorry for it, and doe likewise promise herby that we will not act any play without your hand or substituets hereafter, nor doe any thinge that may prejudice the authority of your office. (Bawcutt 1996, 183)¹

To perform without a license from the Master of the Revels was the ultimate challenge to his authority. It placed the players outside the umbrella of patronage and protection that derived from the King and the Court and normally ensured that lesser offenses were not severely punished. In 1605 Jonson and Chapman had found themselves in precisely this position after the Children of the Queen's Revels performed *Eastward Ho!* Chapman acknowledged, in a letter of apology, "our unhappie booke [which] was presented without your Lordshippes allowance" (Chapman, Jonson, and Marston [1605] 1979, 218).² He and Jonson found themselves in danger of having their ears trimmed and noses slit for seditious libel, the crime of traducing persons of consequence (Donaldson 2011, 207ff).

The Spanish Viceroy affair is the only occasion when the King's Men are known to have transgressed in this way. Normally it was in their interests to stay on good terms with their licenser. We can only presume that the runaway success of *A Game at Chess* that summer – a play that Herbert *had* licensed, but which later drew official rebuke – tempted them to sail even closer to the wind (Dutton 2001). There is no evidence, however, that Herbert punished them further or even made their offense public. He retained their submission until October 1633, a time of particular tension between Herbert and the players, and only then entered it in his office book: "Tis entered here for a remembrance against their disorders" (Bawcutt 1996, 183; Dutton 2000, 41–61).

Herbert's problems in 1624 – as both policeman of the players and their protector – offer useful perspectives on the role of the Masters of the Revels in regulating the theater of their day. Their role as Court officers explains both their interest in fostering the profession, and also the nature of the constraints that they would impose on it. The position was crucial to the development of the drama, indeed to its very survival, through the last twenty years of Elizabeth's reign and up to the closing of the theaters in 1642. It explains the kinds of control and the limits of toleration that applied to professional theater at that time: pressures that nevertheless fostered the work of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Heywood, Webster, Fletcher, Middleton, Massinger, Ford, and their fellows.

Origins

The Master of the Revels was originally a courtier, personally close to the monarch, charged with providing the Court suitable entertainment – like Philostrate, Theseus' "usuall manager of mirth" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Q1600, sig. G3).³ Early holders of the office employed professional entertainers at Court throughout the Tudor era, but they also called regularly on amateur institutions with affiliations to the Court, such as choir schools and the Inns of Court, to stage shows; they were themselves responsible for devising masques and other entertainments involving courtiers. The emphasis was on the Court entertaining itself. But from the late 1570s, when purpose-built theaters around London signaled more regular playing in the capital, professional actors (and the more professionalized boy companies) became the mainstays of Court entertainment. So the office of Master of the Revels developed symbiotically with the development of the profession. The structure of licensing that grew up around the office was precisely one that enabled the most successful actors to become adjuncts of the Court, while also providing them with a stable environment within which they could ply their trade for a profitable audience in the public playhouses.

Early in Elizabeth's reign members of the gentry had patronized the actors, claiming troupes as their household servants. From 1572 this privilege was restricted to the aristocracy (barons

and those of higher degree). Patronage by an influential aristocrat became necessary for any company wishing to tour commercially, and a form of control; no patron would stand for behavior that reflected badly on them or their livery, which the company wore on their travels. Companies could locally get permission to perform from two justices of the peace, but not to travel at will. In 1574 Leicester's Men received a patent giving them the right to perform anywhere in the country, providing that their plays had been "sene and allowed" by the Master of the Revels (Chambers 1923, 2: 87–8; Gurr 1996, 187–8). This defended them against civic authorities who tried to circumscribe their playing; the Master's license certified that their plays were fit for Court and not to be challenged elsewhere.

In 1581 Queen Elizabeth gave a special commission to the serving Master, Edmund Tilney, "whom we ordeyne appointe and auctorise by these presentes of all suche showes, plaies, plaiers and playmakers, together with their playing places, to order and reforme, auctorise and put downe, as shalbe thought meete or unmeete unto himself or his said deputie in that behalf" (Chambers 1923, 4: 285–7). This was the basis of Tilney's role as overseer of professional playing in the London region. Some have seen it as a step toward absolute state control of players and playing, in the wake of concerted efforts in the provinces to eradicate the Catholic-tainted mystery cycles (Wickham 1959–81, 2: 94). But the pressures that required an end to such playing did not apply to professional theater in London. As W. R. Streitberger (1978) has shown, Tilney was given his powers specifically to further his role as the provider of entertainment at Court. Prior to his appointment in 1579 the Revels Office had been in disarray: some of the shows it sponsored were not satisfactory and costs were out of control.

This commission gave Tilney direct authority to draw upon the reliable and relatively inexpensive professional companies. It was clear that his attention would always be on the most successful companies, increasingly patronized by the most powerful figures at Court. In 1578 the Privy Council listed troupes patronized by the Earls of Sussex, Warwick, Leicester, and Essex (together with the Children of the Chapel Royal and of St Paul's) as of particular interest to the Court (Gurr 1996, 55). These would change over time, but their number remained relatively stable.

Until 1607 Tilney had capacious quarters in the old palace of St John's where "our Court playes have been in late daies yearely rehersed, perfected, and corrected before they come to the publike view of the Prince and the Nobility" (Heywood 1612, sig. E1v). The quality of drama at Court improved and was provided more economically. In 1583 the Privy Council ordered the creation of a new troupe under direct royal patronage, the Queen's Men (McMillin and MacLean 1999; Gurr 1996, 196ff). Tilney formed this elite company with players from other troupes, and they received the lion's share of performances at Court over the next several years. They were subject to Tilney's authority (and protection) both in London and in the extensive touring operations that were part of their remit: they carried the Queen's livery, and her government's view of the world, throughout the kingdom.

Competing Authorities

Tilney, however, remained only one figure in a complex array of authorities in the London region. The Privy Council represented the Court. One member, the Lord Chamberlain, had a particular brief for theatricals and, although they were not formally his subordinates, Masters of the Revels from Tilney onward increasingly operated in his orbit (Streitberger 2008). Lord Charles Howard, patron of both Tilney and his successor, Sir George Buc, briefly held the office (1583–5) but

continued to take a particular interest in the actors when he became Lord Admiral, while his father-in-law, the first Lord Hunsdon, served as Lord Chamberlain (Gurr 2002).

The city of London was variously represented by its Lord Mayor, its Common Hall, Court of Common Council and Court of Aldermen. The received picture presents the Court staunchly supporting the actors, while the Puritan-inclined City tried to put them out of business. But this is misleading (Archer 2009). The Court supported actors patronized by its own senior members, whose commercial activities they regarded as rehearsals for performance before the Queen; otherwise, it readily followed Parliament in stigmatizing unlicensed actors as rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, subject to punitive laws (Chambers 1923, 4: 270; Beier 1986). The City had legitimate concerns about the maintenance of order and the spread of plague (which the Privy Council sometimes shared), as well as the promotion of crime and lewd behavior. But they also sought to tax playing to support hospitals for the poor and sick (Ingram 1992, 119–49; Freedman 1996). In 1574 the Common Council sought to establish that playing places in the City should be licensed, and that plays performed there should be “first perused and allowed” by persons appointed by the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen, rather than promote “the benefit of any private person” (Ingram 1992, 127, 142). There is no evidence, however, that such persons were ever appointed. The City’s arguments sometimes boiled down to a determination to assert their authority in their own bailiwick.

Because of such tensions – financial as much as ideological – all the early purpose-built playhouses were constructed outside the jurisdiction of the City authorities, in the suburbs to the north and south. Even here they were not outside the framework of authority: they came under the magistrates for Middlesex and Surrey.⁴ But until around 1596 – and perhaps even after that – there was also regular playing at inns within the City’s jurisdiction, notably the Bell, the Bull, the Cross Keys, and the Bell Savage (Kathman 2009). The role of the Master of the Revels evolved, not without competition, in the midst of these conflicting authorities and agendas.

In 1589, the Privy Council instructed Tilney to act together with nominees of the Lord Mayor and the Archbishop of Canterbury in a Commission for the censoring of all plays to be performed “in and about the City of London.” But the articles setting it up are all we ever hear of this (Chambers 1923, 4: 306). By 1592 Tilney’s importance was such that the City authorities sought (without success) to buy him out (4: 307–9). By then, he was certainly receiving regular fees from the theatrical financier Philip Henslowe, landlord of the Lord Admiral’s Men at the Rose. We may assume he was similarly receiving fees from the Burbages, who ran the Theatre, and from the management of the Curtain.

Tilney received separate fees for licensing the playhouse, the acting company, and each play that he would first “peruse” (that is, read rather than see it in rehearsal), then “allow” when he was satisfied with it, finally appending his license at the end of what became the only “allowed copy” for performance purposes. He kept records of licenses in his office-book, but it and that of his successor, Sir George Buc, have been lost. Only from the time of Sir John Astley (1622), who quickly sold his office to Sir Henry Herbert (1623), do we have information from their shared office-book – but even that is patchy and second-hand, the original having disappeared (Bawcutt 1996, 13–26). We often have to infer from this what may have been earlier practice. The precise nature and rate of fees changed over time, but a significant economic symbiosis between the Master of the Revels and those whose livelihood he licensed remained throughout (Dutton 1991, 52, 116; Bawcutt 1996, 38–40).

Protector and Regulator

In such a context we can see why some (including the City authorities) might see the Master of the Revels as the protector of the most successful actors, as much as their regulator. And we may suppose that the actors appreciated this themselves; his license gave them protection against hostile authorities, opportunities for prestigious performances at Court, and the sole right to perform their “allowed” plays, at least in London – a version of performing copyright. As a censor it seems that each of the Masters was scrupulous, and could on occasion be strict, but on the whole applied relatively broad criteria of what was permissible, determined by their position within the Court.

At the start of her reign Elizabeth issued a proclamation (May 16, 1559) that instructed royal officers everywhere on what was not acceptable in plays:

her majestie doth ... charge every one of them, as they will aunswere: that they permyt none to be played wherein either matters of religion or of the governaunce of the estate of the common weale shalbe handled or treated, beyng no meete matters to be wrytten or treated upon, but by menne of auctoritie, learning and wisdome, nor to be handled before any audience, but of grave and discreete persons. (Chambers 1923, 4: 263–4)

There is an implicit assumption that even matters “of religion or of the governaunce of the estate of the common weale” *might* be staged in privileged contexts, such as the universities, Inns of Court and noble households – a Court standard of what was acceptable. This explains how a play like *Gorboduc*, which clearly treats such matters (the need for the Queen to marry, beget heirs or otherwise provide for the succession), could be performed at the Inns of Court. But the play later became available for public playing, circumventing any notional restrictions.

The Masters of the Revels, who were supposed to be reviewing plays for possible staging before the monarch, implicitly applied a similar standard in their licenses for public performance. One of the clearest demonstrations of this comes in Herbert’s office-book (January 1631): “I did refuse to allow of a play of Messinger’s, because itt did contain dangerous matter, as the deposing of Sebastian king of Portugal by Philip the <Second,> and ther being a peace sworn twixte the kings of England and Spayne” (Bawcutt 1996, 171–2). So he refused to license a play overtly hostile to the King’s current foreign policy. Yet five months later he licensed a play called *Believe as You List* that is transparently a reworking of the play he had turned down, merely transposed to classical antiquity. All the Masters were literate and sophisticated men: Tilney a diplomatic genealogist, Buc a respected historian, and Herbert the brother of the poets Edward and George. All were capable of recognizing a subtext when they saw one.⁵ Herbert was doubtless well aware that this was the same play, reworked, but judged that it was no longer an overt affront to the royal prerogative nor to a friendly foreign power. In that context it was acceptable. It was not for him to second guess either Massinger’s *intentions* or what audiences might *infer* from material that was not openly provocative.

There is something patrician about this: Herbert, as representative of the privileged classes, not deigning to notice what did not strictly require to be noticed. The caste-conscious Spanish Ambassador who complained about *A Game at Chess* wrote that the play was “offensive to my royal master (if, indeed, the grandeur and inestimable value of his royal person could receive offense from anybody, and especially from men of such low condition as ordinarily are the authors and actors of such follies)” (Middleton [1624] 1993, 193).

English censorship lived by a similar code: “There were conventions that both sides accepted as to how far a writer could go in explicit address to the contentious issues of his day, how he could encode his opinions so that nobody would be *required* to make an example of him” (Patterson 1984, 11).

There is, conversely, always something disingenuous about dramatists’ protestations of innocence, of having been misunderstood. When Jonson laments how “nothing can be so innocently writ or carried but may be made obnoxious to construction” ([1606] 2012; Epistle to *Volpone*, ll. 47–8), he invites the very reading between the lines that he decries. Similarly, in Massinger’s *The Roman Actor* (1626), Caesar’s spy, Aretinus, accuses the actors: “You are they / That search into the secrets of the time, / And under feigned names on the stage present / Actions not to be touched at” (1.3.36–9). Paris the Tragedian counters that it is wrong to hold players to blame for meanings that are unintentional and not aimed at individuals. But only two years after *A Game at Chess*, when the actors indisputably did satirize known individuals, his words seem more hollow and ironic the longer he speaks.

It was the Master’s function to ensure, not exactly the innocence of a play, but that its fictional veiling was adequate, so that serious offense might not be offered to persons of note or to friendly foreign dignitaries. They also needed to be alert to contentious issues with public order implications; otherwise, they could take quite a relaxed approach to their remit. The only extant manuscript showing Tilney’s attentions is *Sir Thomas More*, about a man seen by many as a Catholic martyr to Elizabeth’s father, Henry VIII; the play depicts More going to his death for refusing to accept the Act of Supremacy, although it tactfully minimizes the detail. We might have expected Tilney to ban the play outright, but his markings suggest he was careful, although not overly disturbed, about its main theme. But the opening scenes, depicting anti-alien riots in London, brought this strict warning: “Leave out the insurrection wholly & the Cause ther off & begin with Sr Tho: Moore att the mayors sessions with a reportt afterwarde off his good service don being Shrive [Sheriff] of London uppon a mutiny Agaynst the Lumbardes only by A Shortt reporte & nott otherwise at your perilles. E. Tyllney” (Dutton 1991, Plate 7). His concern is almost certainly anti-alien riots in London at the time the play was first drafted (Long 1989). Feelings against French immigrants were running high and references to the Lombards might be less inflammatory; but the main thrust is to replace graphic scenes of rioting with a brief *report* of More’s actions. Tilney seems more concerned by the immediate threat to public order than by the play’s broader ideological sympathies.

We may see something analogous in the apparent censorship of the 1597 quarto of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. We do not know if the abdication scene was cut by Tilney, by the actors themselves, or by the press censor (Dutton 1991, 124–7). But it is a curious censorship that allows the murder of a king to be shown, while cutting the very stylized and non-inflammatory abdication. The most compelling explanation is that the scene specifically shows Richard’s abdication being sanctioned by Parliament, suggesting that it had authority in the making and breaking of monarchs (Clegg 1997). With neither an agreed successor to Elizabeth nor an agreed mechanism for finding one, this might be highly contentious. Again, the censor’s attention seems to fall upon immediately provocative matters rather than on subversive subtexts in the play as a whole – although it was those very subtexts that presumably made the play so attractive to the Earl of Essex’s supporters on the eve of their 1601 rebellion (Barroll 1988).⁶ For all this speculation, it remains just possible that there was no censorship at all, that the abdication scene was a later addition, first appearing in the fourth quarto of 1608.

The End of Elizabeth's Reign

The situation as Elizabeth's reign neared its end contributed to a sequence of Privy Council initiatives concerning playing, which finally installed the Master of the Revels center-stage. In July 1597 they issued an extraordinary order, never fully explained, that all the theaters should be "plucked down" (Wickham 1969; Ingram 1978, 167–86). Timing suggests this was linked with the lost *Isle of Dogs*, written by Thomas Nashe and Ben Jonson, and played by Pembroke's Men at the Swan. The Council denounced it as "sclanderous," "lewd," and "seditious" (Nicholl 1984, 242–56). The licensed torturer, Richard Topcliffe, was involved in the investigation, the only instance of such brutal realities being brought to bear on theatrical affairs. But perhaps more than one agenda was in play. Sir Robert Cecil had a separate dispute with the owner of the Swan; and the Admiral's Men resented that Pembroke's Men were luring leading players away from them (Ingram 1978). Any of these factors may have had a bearing on the Privy Council's actions.

Their order was never enforced. Instead, in February 1598 they formally restricted the companies authorized to play in the London area to two, both licensed by Tilney and patronized by their own members, the Lord Chamberlain and Lord Admiral, both cousins of the Queen.⁷ This marginalized both Pembroke's Men and the Swan. At the same time Parliament removed the right of justices of the peace to authorize playing, while penalties against masterless men became even more draconian (Chambers 1923, 4: 324–5). In June 1600 the two companies were restricted to playing in London at their "usual houses" – for the Chamberlain's the Globe, for the Admiral's the nearly built Fortune (4: 332–3). The number of performances was supposedly limited, although this may never have been enforced. The intention, however, was clear: to restrict London playing to two select companies, both patronized by Privy Councillors, in fixed locations and at known times, conditions that Tilney could easily police (Dutton 2000, 16–40).

The reality was a little different: first Paul's Boys, then the Children of the Chapel, both defunct for nearly a decade, were revived. Then Derby's Men began playing at the new Boar's Head, and performed at Court. When they failed to achieve a permanent place among the "allowed" companies, Worcester's Men stepped in. Worcester, a Privy Councillor, secured them the status of an "allowed" company – making three adult and two boys' companies, all answerable to Tilney (Dutton 2001). This was as many as the Master of the Revels was ever directly responsible for, although companies and patronage possibilities fluctuated. Tilney and his successors sought to expand their authority (and revenue) by licensing nontheatrical shows and actors travelling in the provinces (Dutton 1991, 116, 235–6). But their central concern was always those London-based companies, the most successful of their time, who bequeathed the great majority of plays that have survived. Those plays sometimes boast of their companies' patented status. Like Robert Armin's "licensed fools," such as Feste in *Twelfth Night* and the Fool in *King Lear*, they were royally sanctioned:

By wisdom's heart, there is no essence mortal
That I can envy, but a plump-cheeked fool.
O, he hath a patent of immunities
Confirmed by custom, sealed by policy,
As large as spacious thought.

(Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, 4.1.12–16)

James I

When James succeeded Elizabeth he took four of the five London companies into royal patronage: the Chamberlain's became the King's Men; the Admiral's, Prince Henry's; Worcester's, Queen Anne's. The Children of the Chapel became the Children of the Queen's Revels.⁸ It was a logical development of the policy of Elizabeth's Privy Council, taking into account the multiple Jacobean royal households.

The adult companies remained answerable to Tilney. But the Queen's Revels Boys were given their own licenser, Samuel Daniel, and for several years (under various titles but always at the Blackfriars playhouse) they were responsible for some of the most notable theatrical scandals of the era. Their management fostered a repertoire of politically charged satirical drama, possibly encouraged by Queen Anne's patronage (Lewalski 1993, 24; Munro 2005). Daniel was questioned by the Privy Council for commenting on the Essex rebellion in his own *Philotas* (1604). And, as we have seen, *Eastward Ho!* (1605) visited serious repercussions upon its authors; their failure to license the play compounded its satire of Scots courtiers and only intercession by powerful people at Court effected their release (Donaldson 2011, 212–13). Daniel surrendered his post as licenser, although it is unclear who succeeded him, and the company lost the Queen's patronage. But Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606) also caused offense to the Scots and "sundry were committed to Bridewell" (Dutton 1991, 179), while the company continued to cause scandal with Chapman's *Byron* plays (1607/8) and other works. Others in the profession resented the threat to their collective livelihood; Heywood, in his *Apology for Actors*, urges them "to curbe and limit this presumed liberty," while the "little eyases" additions to the folio *Hamlet* have been linked to this crisis (Knutson 2001, 122–3). In 1608 the King lost patience and withdrew the company's license.

Lines of authority in the Revels Office seem further confused by the fact that in 1606 Sir George Buc began licensing plays for the press, work formerly done by clerics of the Court of High Commission (Clegg 2001). It has been supposed that Buc acted as Tilney's deputy, but there is no evidence of this and Tilney collected his allowance for attendance at Court until his death. Only then, in 1610, can we be confident that one man, Buc, licensed all the London companies, as well as playbooks for the press. Tilney bequeathed him a system of licensing and control that did not change in essence until the closing of the theaters. From 1606 this included the need to attend to Parliament's "Acte to restrain the Abuses of Players," prohibiting blasphemous language on the stage. Most but not all texts licensed or relicensed after this are more careful (see, for example, the differences between the quartos and folios of *Volpone* and *Othello*). The manuscript of *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611), bearing Buc's license, shows how alert he was to the issue, marking a number of places where such changes were necessary, and expecting the actors to follow suit in others (Dutton 1991, 194–209).

The manuscript of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavelte* (1618) also shows Buc's hand; we see a careful method of lightly penciled markings, some reinforced in heavy ink, with warning crosses in margins (Howard-Hill 1988). He tries to find acceptable alternatives to objectionable material, seeming only to cross it out altogether as a last resort. He does lose patience in an initialed note: "I like not this: neithr do I think that the prince [of Orange] was thus disgracefully used. besides he is too much presented" (Dutton 1991, 208–17). We learn during the *Game at Chess* controversy that "there was a commaundment and restraint given against the representinge of anie moderne Christian kings in those Stage-playes" (Middleton [1624] 1993, 200); an issue in *Barnavelte* is that the Prince was not exactly a sovereign. On the whole, however, Buc seems

patiently constructive, only drawing a line when faced with outright provocation, as in a strongly antimonarchist passage with the suggestion “you can apply this” (Dutton 1991, 214–15). He tinkered, redrafted, but finally crossed out the whole passage. In all probability the play (like Chapman’s *Byron* plays) was doubly problematic since it depicts diplomatically sensitive events in a friendly foreign nation while alluding to matters closer to home. It was perhaps read as shadowing the death of Walter Raleigh, like Barnavelt a “patriot” who had fallen from royal favor and been executed.

Buc finally went mad, probably from the pressures of trying to run his office in a Court that was all but bankrupt. His successor, Sir John Astley, quickly sold the post to Sir Henry Herbert.⁹ Herbert was the client and kinsman of his Lord Chamberlain, the powerful third Earl of Pembroke; the Earl of Montgomery (later fourth Earl of Pembroke) succeeded his brother in office in 1626, so the essential ties of kinship remained. This perhaps helped to maintain a continuity of emphasis and practice in the Revels Office, at a time when the supremacy of the Duke of Buckingham and later the personal government of Charles I generated a political atmosphere very different from that in which the largely consensual role of the Master of the Revels had evolved.

Herbert was in office only a year before the most resonant theatrical scandal of the era occurred. Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* performed successively to packed houses for an unprecedented nine days (barring only Sundays), before Spanish protests had it stopped. It satirizes the machinations of Jesuits and of the previous Spanish Ambassador, Gondomar, reviewing Anglo-Spanish relations in unusually close detail. Gondomar and the Archbishop of Spalato were impersonated in some detail (the actors acquired a suit of Gondomar’s clothes and a “chair of ease” for his anal fistula); other characters were shrouded in the allegory of chess pieces, but it was evident that they represented, among others, the kings of Spain and England, Prince Charles and Buckingham. Herbert licensed the play in the usual way, but commentators then and some scholars since have supposed that the play may have been sponsored at the highest level. This is not a necessary conjecture. England and Spain were on the brink of war, in which context Herbert would have felt no need to protect Spanish sensitivities. Only the delay in finally severing relations, and the protests of an isolated and paranoid Ambassador, made it necessary for notice to be taken (Dutton 2001).

The possibilities of adding overt impersonation to an otherwise innocuous script obviously tested the trust between the Master of the Revels and the players. In 1632 Herbert recorded: “In the play of *The Ball*, written by Sherley, and acted by the Queens players, ther were divers personated so naturally, both of lords and others of the Court, that I took it ill” (Bawcutt 1996, 177). The chess in *A Game at Chess* allegory may have looked adequate veiling on paper, but as with *The Ball* performance proved a different matter. The official correspondence after Middleton’s play suggests that the “personation” of royalty was the issue that rankled, rather than the general import of the play.¹⁰

Middleton may have spent some time in prison over *Chess*, but the King’s Men suffered only a brief suspension of playing (Middleton [1624] 1993, 211–12, 206–7). This was typical. By the Jacobean era it was dramatists rather than actors who most often carried the blame for offensive material, sometimes spending relatively brief periods in prison (or in hiding). They served as convenient scapegoats; perhaps some of them coached the actors in their work, in the role of a modern director. Christopher Beeston, manager of the Queen’s Men, assured Herbert over *The Ball* “that he would not suffer it to be done by the poett any more, who deserves to be punisht” (Bawcutt 1996, 177). It is difficult to believe, however, that the actors did not know what they were doing. But no one involved in the theater suffered the grim mutilations of John Stubbes or William

Prynne, or the prolonged imprisonment of Sir John Hayward, received for their transgressions in print (Finkelpearl 1986). This testifies to the effectiveness of the Revels office as an instrument of regulation, but also to the general goodwill of the Court toward the actors it patronized.

Caroline Anxieties

In October 1633 a revival of Fletcher's old play *The Woman's Prize* (or *The Tamer Tamed*) severely strained Herbert's relations with the actors (Bawcutt 1996, 182–3; Dutton 2000, 41–61). A revival performed according to the "allowed copy" had not hitherto required that a play be relicensed. Yet Herbert stopped this performance at short notice, raising "some discourse in the players, though no disobedience." He recorded objections to "oaths, prophaness and ribaldrye," which might register some of the religious divisions of the 1630s. But he was almost certainly also reacting to the play's anti-Catholicism and its husband-taming heroine, Maria. In 1633 this would be seen as glancing at Queen Henrietta-Maria, her Catholicism, and her influence over Charles I.

The fact that the King's Men and Herbert were already in dispute over Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* is probably also relevant and further evidence of tension during Charles's personal rule; it had been referred to Archbishop Laud himself in the Court of High Commission (Butler 1992).¹¹ Herbert now insisted that revived old plays should be relicensed "since they may be full of offensive things against church and state, ye rather that in former time the poetts tooke greater liberty than is allowed them by me." The actors involved later apologized for their "ill manners" over the cancellation; they knew how things stood. Now Herbert inserted the apology they had signed after *The Spanish Viceroy* in his office-book.

One effect of the growing identification of the leading companies with the Caroline Court was the emergence of courtier playwrights, who were able to challenge the authority of the Master of the Revels.¹² Astley, for example, had problems with a play by Lodowick Carlell, a courtier with connections: "6 Sep. 1622 . . . a new play called *Osmond the Great Turk*, which Mr Hemmings and Mr Rice affirmed to me that Lord Chamberlain gave order to allow of it because I refused to allow it <?at > first" (Bawcutt 1996, 137). Carlell's influence circumvented the usual protocols, although the normal machinery of Astley's perusal, allowance (and payment) was ultimately observed, despite his misgivings. In 1634 Davenant objected to changes Herbert had made to his play *The Wits*. Davenant had influence and Herbert reviewed it with King Charles himself: "The king is pleasd to take *faith, death, slight*, for asseverations, and no oaths, to which I doe humbly submit as my masters judgment; but under favour conceive them to be oaths, and enter them here, to declare my opinion and submission" (Bawcutt 1996, 186).

Herbert also recorded his own referral of *The King and the Subject* (1638), by the professional dramatist Philip Massinger, to the King: "who, readinge over the play at Newmarket, set his marke upon the place with his owne hande, and in thes words: 'This is too insolent, and to bee changed.' Note, that the poett makes it the speech of a king, Don Pedro kinge of Spayne, and spoken to his subjects" (Bawcutt 1996, 204). The passage, which he quotes, concerns royal taxation without Parliamentary sanction, a very sensitive issue. The wonder is that Herbert did not simply cancel it, or even refuse the entire play. In fact, he followed Tilney and Buc in doing his best to make it playable, allowing it on condition that "the reformations [be] most strictly observed, and not otherwise," including that the provocative title be changed. But he took the precaution of referring it to the King, whose "too insolent" suggests that he was generally inured to insolence, but that this crossed the limits of toleration. Herbert notes that the context (a king speaking to his subjects)

contributes to the offense. As the Spanish Ambassador suggested over *A Game at Chess*, majesty does not normally acknowledge such fleabites, treating them with patrician disdain. This was true and even when he did deign to notice there were no recriminations: Massinger was not to be punished for what he presumably thought. There is no evidence of *any* dramatist of the period being punished for his ideas, opinions, or intentions, although a few were interrogated.

If this seems suspiciously liberal, we may have to settle for a truth unpalatable to many modern scholars: that in early modern England, players and playwrights were too insignificant for those in power to take seriously, except when they were “too insolent,” contriving to offend someone with influence (Yachnin 1991). And the Masters of the Revels prevented that from happening too often. This made them, perhaps paradoxically, an important element in the cultural formula that produced early modern drama. Without their protective presence, giving the elite of the theatrical profession a degree of expressive space (albeit within defined limits), it is unlikely that the plays they licensed could have been as intellectually, socially and politically vigorous as so many of them were.

Closing the Theaters

Tensions surrounding *The King and the Subject* clearly foreshadow the Civil War. But, just as it is misleading to see the early survival of theater simply as an assertion of courtly tastes over Puritan attitudes in the City, it is also a mistake to see what happened in 1642 as the revenge of Parliamentary Puritans. Parliament passed the critical ordinance to end playing on September 2, 1642. Earlier, on January 26 (before the final breach with the King), an order was moved in the Commons “that in these times of calamity in Ireland and the distractions in this kingdom, that all interludes and plays be suppressed for a season.” But that motion was “laid aside by Mr Pym his seconding of Mr Waller in alleging it was their trade” (Coates, Snow, and Young 1982, 182). If a leading Parliamentarian like John Pym resisted a ban on playing as an infringement of the players’ livelihood, and the House backed him, it is difficult to see what finally happened as the act of vengeful Puritans. The whole business underlines the complex mix of political, economic, and social pressures within which playing had operated up to this point.

Even the September ordinance only required that “while these sad Causes and set times of Humiliation doe continue, publike Stage-Playes shall cease,” referring to the rebellion in Ireland. There was no move against the playhouses, and probably “the prohibition was intended to be a temporary one, to last as long as the crisis which occasioned it” (Roberts 1997). It was perhaps the reaction of the actors themselves to the loss of courtly protection that turned a temporary prohibition into an eighteen year disruption; “even before the actual closure . . . [the King’s Men seem] to have started to disintegrate” (Gurr 1996, 385). Those who had controlled them also parted company, underlining the complexity of the new affiliations. In 1643 Henry Herbert joined the royalists at Oxford, but never as was once supposed fought for the King; by late 1645 he decided that the royalist cause was lost and by 1648 had made his peace with the Long Parliament in London. His kinsman and superior, Lord Chamberlain Pembroke, sided (however reluctantly) with Parliament from the start. Only as positions hardened did a vindictive antitheatricality overtake Parliament: in 1647 they chose to regard the old legislation against masterless players as applying to all of them; the next year they ordered all the playhouses to be demolished.

The system of theatrical control exercised by the Masters of the Revels is consistent with period attitudes to print censorship. Debora Shuger speaks of a “system of beliefs and values that made the regulation of language [in Tudor-Stuart England], including state censorship, seem a good idea – that

made such regulation seem no less *obviously* right and necessary than constraints on non-verbal behaviour” (2006, 5). At the heart of this is a belief in the damage community suffers from unregulated slander of public figures: “The legal and cultural rules regulating language cannot be understood apart from the normative model of Christian community they presuppose . . . the 1559 Injunctions, which enact the Elizabethan licensing system, open by condemning ‘slandrous words and railings whereby charity, the knot of all Christian society, is loosed’” (2006, 142). Tilney and his successors made a handsome living in constraining the discourse of the theater according to such principles.

NOTES

- 1 The two most venerable shareholders in the King’s Men, John Heminge and Henry Condell, were not required to sign, presumably indicating that they were not participants in the transgression.
- 2 Precisely which “Lordshippe” was addressed here is unclear; the licensing of the Children of the Queen’s Revels is a messy subject (see below). But the principle is clear.
- 3 Philostrate’s role is more prominent in the quarto text; most of it is transferred to Egeus in the 1623 folio.
- 4 For different emphases see Mullaney (1988).
- 5 No practicing playwright ever became Master of the Revels, though John Lyly hoped to succeed Tilney; and Ben Jonson received a reversion to the post in 1621 but did not live to enjoy it (Hunter 1962, 78, 85–6; Donaldson 2011, 367, 502). For more on the life and career of George Buc, see Eccles (1933).
- 6 Augustine Phillips, the actor, was questioned about the performance and insisted that the play (probably Shakespeare’s) was an old one and so, implicitly, licensed. The Chamberlain’s Men received no penalty and performed at Court within the month, on the eve of Essex’s execution.
- 7 The Queen’s Men lost their special status at Court after 1594, though they continued as a touring company (McMillin and MacLean 1999).
- 8 The much smaller Paul’s Boys were in decline and disappeared around 1606.
- 9 Technically Herbert was Astley’s deputy, but until the Civil War he acted with all the authority of office.
- 10 Only people of substance would be protected from malicious “personation.” On *The Old Joiner of Aldgate* (1603) and *The Late Murder in the White Chapel, or Keep the Widow Waking* (1624), where middling folk were impersonated without redress, see Dutton (1991), 129–32.
- 11 The actors claimed they played what Jonson wrote and Herbert licensed. Jonson and Herbert counter-argued that the King’s Men had added the offensive lines. The actors finally accepted responsibility, possibly a prudential retreat in a situation where the whole profession stood to lose.
- 12 In arguing that the leading companies were increasingly identified with the Court, I do not suggest that the Court was itself monolithic or that the actors and their dramatists simply endorsed royal policy. Rather, their economic and social dependence on the Court affected their theatrical styles and strategies. *The King and the Subject* demonstrates that there remained room for a considerable range of views (Butler 1984).

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Playing Companies and Repertory

Roslyn L. Knutson

A playing company in early modern England was known by the name of its patron, as in the “Earl of Oxford’s Men,” or by its playing venue, as in “the Children of Paul’s.” Occasionally a company was known by its players: the title-page of *A Knack to Know a Knaue* advertised the play by way of its lead, Edward Alleyn, and its clown, William Kempe.¹ Also, according to Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, a company established its identity by means of its “acting style, its staging methods, its kinds of versification, [and] its sense of what constructed a worthwhile repertory of plays.”² Unfortunately, most of the play titles and even more of the texts owned by companies have not survived; it is therefore difficult to identify early modern English playing companies by their dramaturgy. Nevertheless, a few repertory lists do exist: for example, the titles in the accounts of the Revels Office for productions by various companies at Court, 1572–85; titles in the performance lists and payments to dramatists in the book of accounts kept by Philip Henslowe at the Rose and Fortune playhouses, 1592–1603; and titles licensed by Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, and entered in his office-book, 1622–42. It is from these, supplemented by the attribution of company ownership on the title-pages of plays in print, that a discussion of playing companies and their repertory may begin.

The adult companies with a significant presence at Court in the 1570s and early 1580s included the Earl of Leicester’s Men, the Earl of Sussex’s Men, and the Earl of Warwick’s Men; also at Court were boy companies, including those from the Merchant Taylors School, the Queen’s Chapel, and Paul’s School. The kinds of plays performed by the boys appear similar, if the titles of their offerings are a fair measure. Each relied on classical materials, romances, and the moral play: *Ariodante and Genevora* and *Perseus and Andromeda* (Merchant Taylors); *Narcissus* and *Loyalty and Beauty* (Chapel); *Scipio Africanus* and *The History of Error* (Paul’s). In the mid-1580s John Lyly began to write for the company at Paul’s and the Children of the Chapel (now at Blackfriars). A number of Lyly’s plays survive, including *Campaspe* (Q1584), *Endimion* (Q1591), and *Midas* (Q1592). These texts suggest that the repertories of the boy companies, which continued to be

identified with stories from classical history and mythology, acquired a witty edge that perhaps masked commentary on political issues.

Repertory evidence for the early men's companies also comes primarily from the titles of plays in the Revels accounts at Court. But a somewhat fuller picture of their business is possible because, in their desire for a license and a place to play in the London area, they left more of a paper trail. In 1572, Leicester's Men, a touring company since their formation in 1559, asked their patron, Robert Dudley, to certify them with a license. Six players signed the letter: James Burbage, John Perkin, John Lanham, William Johnson, Robert Wilson, and Thomas Clarke. By this time Leicester's Men probably had already occupied the Red Lion playhouse (see David Kathman, Chapter 16 in this volume). The repertory of Leicester's Men included offerings at Court such as *Philemon and Philecia*, *The Collier*, and *A Greek Maid*; also *The Three Ladies of London* (if its dramatist, R. W., was their Robert Wilson), and *Samson* (if they played at the Red Lion). These titles suggest a repertory like those of the boy companies in its romances and moral plays, broadened by the inclusion of biblical subjects and folk or estate characters.

The Earl of Sussex's Men, under the patronage of Thomas Radcliffe, were a touring company at their inception in 1569; when Radcliffe became the Lord Chamberlain in 1572, the company also began to play at Court, making thirteen appearances through 1582–3. Judging from the titles recorded in the Revels accounts, 1578–80, Sussex's Men (also known as the Chamberlain's Men) performed classical and romance materials mixed with commoner subjects: *The Rape of the Second Helen*, *Sarpedon*, *Portio and Demorantes*, *The Cruelty of a Stepmother*, and *Murderous Michael*. The famous clown Richard Tarlton played with the company in the 1570s; his talents might account for the large crowd at a performance of another of their offerings, *The Red Knight*, at Bristol in 1575. Sussex's Men appeared at Court in 1591–2 (now under the patronage of Thomas' brother, Henry) and at the Rose playhouse from December 27, 1593, through February 6, 1594 (now under the patronage of Robert, son of Henry). In a joint venture with the Queen's Men, with whom they had played occasionally while touring in 1590–1, Sussex's Men played again at the Rose for the first eight days of April 1594.

Philip Henslowe recorded the titles of twelve plays performed at the Rose by Sussex's Men, 1593–4, and all are different from the plays entered for the company in the Revels accounts, 1572–83. In comparison, Sussex's Rose repertory appears much more diverse in materials popular with general audiences. Two of the plays show the influence of the latest fashion in tragedy, the revenge play: *The Jew of Malta* and *Titus Andronicus*. Five suggest the recent fashion of English chronicles: for example, *Buckingham* and *King Lud*. One of these plays survives, *George a Greene, or the Pinner of Wakefield*; its text features a stout-hearted patriot in the title character, George, plus the folk hero Robin Hood.³ Other of Sussex's offerings appear compatible with the 1570s Court repertory in that they suggest the Corpus Christi and moral plays, medieval romance, love stories about fetching female commoners, and true crime; yet the titles of the plays at the Rose suggest that the material was given a more contemporary spin: for example, *Abraham and Lot*, *God Speed the Plough*, *Huon of Bordeaux*, *Fair Maid of Italy*, and *Friar Francis*.

The Earl of Warwick, Ambrose Dudley, patronized a company contemporaneous with that of his brother, the Earl of Leicester. In the 1570s Warwick's Men, like Leicester's, acquired experienced players in Jerome Savage and the Dutton brothers (John and Lawrence). Also like Leicester's, the company acquired a playhouse, which was built in 1576 in Newington, about a mile south of London Bridge.⁴ Although that playhouse was arguably the more significant to the development of commercial theater, the performances of Warwick's Men at Court in 1576–80 provide the only record of their repertory offerings. By title, these plays sound like items that

would succeed with both public and royal audiences: for example, familiar romance material (*The Irish Knight*, *The Knight in the Burning Rock*, and *The Four Sons of Fabius*) and a love story or two (*The Painter's Daughter*, *The Three Sisters of Mantua*). In 1580 the Dutton brothers transferred their affiliation to Oxford's Men; however, other members of Warwick's Men (or perhaps new ones) played in the provinces for a few more years.

A significant event in the history of English playing companies occurred in March 1583 when Sir Francis Walsingham authorized Edmund Tilney, Master of Revels, to form a company under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth. More is known about their players and repertory than about any company until the formation of the Admiral's Men and Chamberlain's Men in 1594.⁵ Tilney chose players from Leicester's Men (William Johnson, John Lanham, Robert Wilson), Sussex's Men (John Adams, Richard Tarlton), and the former Warwick's Men (John Dutton, later also Lawrence). In addition, John Bentley, Lionel Cooke, John Garland, Tobias Mills, John Singer, and John Towne joined the Queen's Men in 1583. For the next five years, if not the next ten, the Queen's Men dominated theatrical activity at Court, in the provinces, and possibly also in London. At a provincial performance in Norwich in June 1583, several players challenged a customer who did not want to pay, and a by-stander was killed in the resulting affray. In London, the Queen's Men did not establish themselves at a particular playhouse, but to civic officials they seemed to be everywhere. The Privy Council heard complaints in November 1584 that the previous year "all of the places of playeing were filled with men calling themselues the Quenes players" (Chambers 1923, 4: 302).

Despite their hegemony, the Queen's Men faded as a Court and London presence after 1588. One possible reason is that several leading players died, including Richard Tarlton. But another, according to McMillin and MacLean (1998, 33), is the challenge to their dramaturgy presented by new theatrical talents such as Christopher Marlowe. Walsingham's motive in the formation of the Queen's Men had been to use the theater "in the service of a Protestant ideology ... [and] the 'truth' of Tudor history." Nine plays with title-page advertisements of the Queen's Men and printed between 1590 and 1599 suggest how that agenda was carried out. Four were specifically British history plays: *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *King Leir*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard III*. In a fifth, *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, England defeats the Spanish Armada. A sixth, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, features an English wizard and a subplot of royal romance; a seventh, *The Old Wives Tale*, is a series of English folktales. In these plays there is evidence of the acting style, staging, and versification that made the Queen's Men the premier troupe of their time; yet by 1590 that very dramaturgy led to their commercial decline. These plays are highly visual, depending on the skills of the players with "standard gestures, intonations, costumes, wigs, false noses, dialects, postures, gags, songs, and pratfalls" (McMillin 1972, 14). The stories are overplotted, and a common verse form is the fourteenner (McMillin and MacLean 1998, 124–54). This dramaturgy could not compete for long with the high astounding terms and moral ambiguity of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* or Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Remnants of the old company – invigorated with recruits such as Francis Henslowe, George Attewell, Robert Nichols, and Richard Alleyn – continued as a provincial company. They might have played briefly at the Swan playhouse, built in 1595 by Francis Langley. But after 1603, when some of the Queen's players acquired a new patron in the Duke of Lennox, the company slipped further into commercial insignificance.

The Queen's Men, having dominated performances at Court since their formation in March 1583, had company in the winter of 1588–9: the Children of Paul's gave one performance, and the Admiral's Men gave two. Over the next few years, the balance of Court appearances continued

to shift away from the Queen's Men. In 1590–1, Strange's Men performed at Court twice; in 1591–2 Strange's Men gave six performances, Sussex's Men one, and Hertford's Men one. In 1592–3 Pembroke's Men appeared at Court for the first time, adding two performances to the three by Strange's Men (who would become Derby's Men in September 1593). Although the Queen's Men gave the only performance at Court in 1593–4 (on Twelfth Night), the transition to other men's companies was accomplished: in 1594–5 the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men divided the five Court performances.

In a sense, then, the story of playing companies and repertory for 1588–94 is the story of companies that were not the Queen's Men. The names of these "other" companies are known: the Admiral's Men, Sussex's Men, Pembroke's Men, Strange's/Derby's Men. The players are also known: Edward Alleyn, Richard Burbage, Richard Cowley, George Bryan, William Kempe, Thomas Pope, Augustine Phillips, John Sincler, and William Sly (to name a few). What is unclear is the match of companies and players. Alleyn, for example, belonged to the Admiral's Men in 1589 (his career probably began with Worcester's Men c.1583), but he was touring with Strange's Men in 1593. Will Sly and John Sincler played with Strange's Men in 1592–3 (if the plot of *2 Seven Deadly Sins* belonged to this company at this time), but they were apparently Pembroke's Men in 1593–4 (if Pembroke's Men at this time owned texts in which these players' names occur).⁶ The advertisement of company ownership on the title-page of the 1594 quarto of *Titus Andronicus* illustrates the instability of lines dividing companies: the title-page assigns the play to "the Earle of *Darbie*, Earle of *Pembrooke*, and Earle of *Sussex* their Seruants." This advertisement may reveal serial company ownership, or it may reveal an amalgamation in one company of players who retained their discrete patronage (for example, in 1593 Edward Alleyn called himself an Admiral's man although he was touring with Lord Strange's Men). Either way, it suggests the expediencies characteristic of the business of playing in the early 1590s. The instability was temporary: out of this reservoir of players and patrons came two companies – the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men – that survived into the reign of Charles I with a relatively stable membership, a solid financial structure, their own playhouses, and a huge repertory of commercially tested plays. But in 1588–94 this longevity could not have been confidently foretold.

Plagues in 1588, 1592, and 1593 contributed to the uncertainty of theatrical conditions by taking star performers such as Richard Tarlton and forcing playhouse closures, thus reducing the opportunities for companies to sustain runs in London. Political, financial, and perhaps even personal disputes contributed to volatility in the playhouse world. The Martin Marprelate controversy of 1588–90 played a role by engaging companies in political arguments against antitheatrical critics. It may be that John Lyly, by his participation in the controversy, inadvertently caused the closure of the playhouse at Paul's at this time (the Children of the Chapel had ceased playing c.1584; Dutton 1991, 76–7). In 1589 James Burbage was involved in a tangle of lawsuits over matters including revenue at the Theatre, the playhouse in Shoreditch built in 1576 largely with money from his brother-in-law, John Brayne. In 1592 John Alleyn, older brother of Edward and player with the company currently at the Theatre, was drawn into the suit as a witness, and his testimony did not help the Burbages. In 1590–1 Alleyn had had his own dispute with Burbage over revenue owed to Alleyn's company for playing. Perhaps as a result of these events, or perhaps by coincidence, a company under the patronage of Ferdinando Strange began to play at the Rose, a relatively new playhouse in Southwark constructed in 1587 by Philip Henslowe. Just prior to the arrival of Strange's Men, Henslowe had remodeled the playhouse, enlarging the area of the yard and the capacity of the galleries. Due to forced playhouse closings, Strange's Men received a license for touring in May 1593; the company, becoming Derby's Men

in September when Ferdinando's father died, played in the provinces into the winter. In 1592 a company under the patronage of Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, began to appear in the provinces, at Court, and perhaps in London. On September 28, 1593, Henslowe wrote to Edward Alleyn that Pembroke's Men had aborted their summer tour for financial reasons: "they cane not saue their carges . . . & weare fayne to pane the(r) parell for ther charge" (Foakes and Rickert 1961, 280). A Pembroke's company toured in the provinces in 1595–6, and perhaps that same version of the company played at the Swan playhouse in 1597. In late summer, however, the players broke with Francis Langley, owner of the playhouse, and many joined the Admiral's Men, effectively bringing Pembroke's Men to an end. The quarrel with Langley and related events are known as the "Isle of Dogs Affair," from the name of a coincidentally controversial play by Thomas Nashe, Ben Jonson, and one or more other players.

Had there not been disruptions of playing due to plague and other factors, it is possible that the emergence of stable companies settled in London for lengthy runs might have occurred much sooner than 1594. Certainly the repertories of the companies in the years from 1588 to 1594 suggest the availability of generically diverse, theatrically innovative, and poetically exciting material. The repertory of Strange's Men at the Rose in 1592–3 is exemplary. The company performed twenty-seven plays, three of which appear to have been tragedies, nine to have been history plays, and the remainder some form of comedy. Two of the tragedies were revenge plays: *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Jew of Malta*; the third, *Machiavel*, might have been. The history plays represented material as diverse as the English chronicles (*Harry of Cornwall*, *Henry VI*), the Mediterranean world (*Titus and Vespasian*, *Muly Mollocco*), empire in the Far East (*Tamar Cham*, parts one and two), and European religio-political turmoil (*Massacre at Paris*). The comedies were equally diverse, including a magician play (*Friar Bacon*), a romance (*Orlando Furioso*), a moral history (*A Knack to Know a Knave*), a biblical moral (*A Looking Glass for London and England*), a pastoral (the lost *Cloris and Ergasto*), a craft play (*The Tanner of Denmark*), and a "wonders" narrative (*Sir John Mandeville*).⁷ In addition to illustrating a range of popular formulas, the repertory of Strange's Men contained multipart plays. *Four Plays in One* was possibly a set of related playlets like *2 Seven Deadly Sins*. *The Comedy of Don Horatio* was a prequel to *The Spanish Tragedy*. *Tamar Cham* was a two-part serial. *Friar Bacon*, if it was *John of Bordeaux*, was a sequel of sorts to *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* in the repertory of another company, the Queen's Men. *Machiavel* was perhaps a spin-off of *The Jew of Malta*, which Strange's Men were themselves playing.

Pembroke's Men had *Edward II*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (that is, *3 Henry VI*) in repertory in 1592–3; advertisements of the company appear on the title-pages of these plays in print. Probably Pembroke's Men also had the companion to the latter play, *The First Part of the Contention of . . . York and Lancaster* (that is, *2 Henry VI*), although its quarto title-page does not so declare.⁸ These few plays are slender evidence of the company's identity in dramaturgy,⁹ but they are nonetheless suggestive. *Edward II* draws on the material of the English chronicles. But, unlike the plain truth of Protestant Tudor ideology in repertory by the Queen's Men, this historical tragedy features male lovers, Ovid's erotic language, and a horrific onstage death. The serial histories of *2* and *3 Henry VI*, which are likewise chronicle plays but epic in scope, dramatize the War of the Roses by staging the rebellion of Jack Cade, the adultery of a queen, the incantations of a sorceress-duchess, the rise of the ruthless Yorks, and one pyrrhic battle after another. The one comedy, *The Taming of a Shrew*, offered a flamboyant battle of the sexes, a testing of the bride in the wedding wager, and the carnival frame of a drunkard who is lord for a day.¹⁰

But even more than by the specific items in their repertory, the companies of Strange's Men and Pembroke's Men signaled by their commerce with dramatists that something unprecedented was happening: the number of talented young poets who expected to make a living from their pen was growing, and their scripts were being acquired by companies who were not the Queen's Men. Strange's Men in 1592–3 had plays by Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge in collaboration with Greene, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare. Pembroke's Men had one play by Marlowe and two by Shakespeare. Furthermore, both companies had the services of stage-savvy writers who now are known only as "anonymous" but who could turn out a script by themselves or with collaborators in a few weeks' time. The availability of these dramatists to companies with open-ended leases at London playhouses enabled the expansion of the market that distinguishes the decade of 1594–1603.

On May 14, 1594, the Admiral's Men performed *The Jew of Malta* at the Rose playhouse. Except for a brief run at the playhouse in Newington in June, the company thus began a six-year run at the Rose, which extended to a run of more than twenty years at the Fortune playhouse (built by Edward Alleyn and Philip Henslowe in 1600 for the company's exclusive use). The Admiral's Men were not an entirely new company in 1594. Charles Howard, their patron, had sponsored a company in 1576 while he was deputy to the Earl of Sussex, then Lord Chamberlain. Howard became Lord Admiral in 1585, and his company appears in records of provincial and London performances into 1591, when its lead player, Edward Alleyn (and no doubt others) performed with members of Strange's Men until the reconstitution of the company in May 1594. Sometime after 1585, the Admiral's Men acquired *Tamburlaine* by Christopher Marlowe, and soon afterwards *Tamburlaine, Part II*;¹¹ they also acquired *The Battle of Alcazar* by George Peele and *The Wounds of Civil War* by Thomas Lodge. In October 1592 Alleyn married Joan Woodward, stepdaughter of Philip Henslowe, thus cementing the professional and family ties that would guarantee the Admiral's Men a playhouse, quality players, and smart financial management.

The repertory acquired by the Admiral's Men is the measure of successful theatrical commerce, 1594–1603. Henslowe's book of accounts contains a calendar of performances for the company from May 14, 1594, to November 5, 1597; it contains entries of payments for playbooks, apparel, and properties from August 25, 1597, to May 9, 1603. These records indicate much of the activity at the Rose and Fortune playhouses. The playlists of 1594–7 show that the company performed an average of thirty-three plays a year, divided fairly evenly between offerings being continued from the previous season and new plays, plus a couple of revivals. Most of the plays were comedies or histories, but the few tragedies tended to receive the longest runs. The titles suggest trends in popular subject matter and genre to which all the companies responded. For example, in November 1595 the Admiral's Men acquired a chronicle play called *Henry V*, which they performed thirteen times through July 15, 1596. Perhaps in this same year, the Queen's Men were performing *The Famous Victories of Henry V* at the Swan, and the Chamberlain's Men were performing *1 Henry IV* at the Theatre. In May 1597 the Admiral's Men acquired *The Comedy of Humours* by George Chapman (a.k.a. *A Humorous Day's Mirth*), and soon the Chamberlain's Men acquired Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*. The domestic prodigal play, *Patient Grissel*, which the Admiral's Men performed in 1599–1600, was soon copied by Worcester's Men with the offerings of *How a Man May Choose a Good Wife from a Bad* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. Furthermore, the repertory of the Admiral's Men illustrates the popularity of the multipart play, not only in the genre of history (for instance, the four-part *Civil Wars of France*, 1598–9) but also in comedic material (for instance, *The Blind Beggar of Bednal Green* and its parts).

The company of Henry Carey, Lord Chamberlain, first appears in theater records in Henslowe's book of accounts in a set of performances in June at the Newington playhouse with the Admiral's Men. They appeared at Court over Christmas, 1594–5, and three members served as payees: Richard Burbage, William Kempe, and William Shakespeare. Other documents indicate that George Bryan, Henry Condell, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, John Sincler, and Will Sly also joined the company at its start. The company played at Burbage's Theatre until 1597, then moved to the adjacent Curtain until the Globe was built in 1599. At the Newington playhouse, the Chamberlain's Men performed *Titus Andronicus*, *Hester and Abasuerus*, *Hamlet*, and *The Taming of a Shrew*.¹² No doubt their players brought additional playbooks from their former companies, and presumably Shakespeare's works to date were among these, but otherwise there is no sure way to identify the company's acquisitions. The Chamberlain's Men's repertory in subsequent years included the anonymous plays *Mucedorus*, *A Larum for London*, and *A Warning for Fair Women*; Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* and *Every Man out of His Humour*; and Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix*. Indirectly, Heminges and Condell provided an approximation of a repertory list for the Chamberlain's Men by publishing the First Folio in 1623, for Shakespeare's collected works probably mimic the company's general holdings. In 1594–1603 specifically, the majority of his plays were comedies or histories. The comedies covered the popular forms of Roman street drama, pastoral, and humors. One comedy, unique for the genre in 1595, appears to have had a sequel, now lost (*Love's Labor's Won*). Another, a satire, exploited the matter of Troy. Eight of the nine histories were serial chronicle plays. The tragic characters, except for the star-crossed lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* and the political assassins of *Julius Caesar*, were revengers.

Two men's companies in London took advantage of a new theater, the Boar's Head, built in 1598. One, Derby's Men, may be traced only in the provinces after their patron died in April 1594 and after many of their players joined the Admiral's Men or Chamberlain's Men in May–June 1594. The other, Worcester's Men (under the patronage of William and Edward Somerset, Earls of Worcester, 1548–89 and 1589–1628), offered the Queen's Men some provincial competition in 1583–5 with players such as Edward Alleyn, Richard Jones, and James Tunstall. Alleyn and Tunstall were Admiral's Men in 1589 and 1594, a fact that suggests some permutation of Worcester's Men into the Admiral's company; but through the 1590s until 1601, Worcester's Men performed primarily (if not exclusively) in the provinces. The construction of the Boar's Head provided an opportunity for Robert Browne of Derby's Men to become a theatrical entrepreneur. In 1599 Browne leased the playhouse (now remodeled) and established his company not only with plays such as the two-part *Edward IV* but also with comedies penned by their patron (William Stanley, Earl of Derby, 1594–1642). The company appeared at Court, 1599–1601. In the autumn of 1601, Browne sublet the Boar's Head to Worcester's Men (now merged with Oxford's Men), and the company performed plays such as *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* and *How a Man May Choose a Good Wife from a Bad*, with scripts by Thomas Heywood. Worcester's Men appeared at Court, 1601–2; in the late summer of 1602, they moved to the Rose, where they played until the death of Queen Elizabeth in March 1603 and the onset of plague in May shut down the playhouses. By October of 1603 Robert Browne had died of that plague. Browne's wife, Susan, later married Thomas Greene, who became a leader in Queen Anne's Men in 1605 (formerly Worcester's Men), thus belatedly joining the companies that had played at the Boar's Head since 1599.

When Worcester's Men moved to the Rose, Philip Henslowe began to keep payments for their scripts, properties, and apparel in his book of accounts, August 1602–May 1603. Some of these plays undoubtedly remained in performance when the company returned to the Boar's Head.

While at the Rose, Worcester's Men acquired at least one tragedy from Thomas Heywood in 1603, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. No other play-texts survive from Worcester's listings, as far as is known, but the presence of titles such as *Shore's Wife*, the two-part *Lady Jane*, and the two-part *Black Dog of Newgate* suggest the continuing popularity of both stories from the English chronicles and multipart plays. The proverbial titles of *Christmas Comes but Once a Year* and *The Blind Eats Many a Fly*, as well as *Medicine for a Curst Wife* (if it was a "shrew" play), suggest familiar comedic folk materials. Further, it is possible to assume that Worcester's Men were as competitive in the theatrical marketplace as the Admiral's Men because they shared dramatists: for example, Henry Chettle, John Day, Thomas Dekker, Richard Hathaway, Thomas Middleton, Wentworth Smith, and John Webster. Also, Worcester's Men had veteran players, such as Christopher Beeston, John Duke, William Kempe, and Robert Pallant. Heywood was both a player and a playwright. By 1605, the company had acquired the patronage of Queen Anne and authorization to play at the Boar's Head, Curtain, and new Red Bull playhouses. Christopher Beeston became the manager, took the company to the new Cockpit playhouse in 1617, and held it together until the death of Queen Anne in 1619.

Two of the boys' companies that had been prominent at Court in the 1580s reappeared as commercial companies in 1599–1600. The Children of Paul's, having acquired the services of John Marston, opened at Paul's playhouse in 1599 with *Antonio and Mellida*, followed soon by its second part, *Antonio's Revenge*. In addition to *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, the company performed *The Maid's Metamorphosis*, *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll*, *Satiromastix* (also played by the Chamberlain's Men), and *Blurt, Master Constable*. The Children of the Chapel, having acquired the services of Ben Jonson, opened at Blackfriars in 1600, and they soon produced *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*. Other repertory offerings included John Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis*, and comedies by George Chapman (such as *All Fools* and *May Day*). Business by the Children of Paul's moved along without significant controversy until its close in the summer of 1606. However, business by the Children of the Chapel – known as the Children of the Queen's Revels in 1604 – soon attracted unwanted attention from powerful nobles, who were offended by the increasingly harsh political satire in the company's plays. The company persisted, following performances of Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* with the collaborative *Eastward Ho*, and John Day's *Isle of Gulls* with Chapman's two-part *Byron*. Consequently, the Queen withdrew her patronage. Henry Evans, who had leased Blackfriars for the company in 1603, relinquished the playhouse in 1608, and the company folded. Some of the players probably moved to the company of the King's Revels, newly formed at Whitefriars.

Soon after James I came to the throne in March 1603, the royal family became the patrons of the men's companies: the Chamberlain's Men became the King's Men; the Admiral's Men became Prince Henry's Men (the Elector Palatine's Men in 1613, also Palsgrave's Men); and Worcester's Men became Queen Anne's Men. The Chamberlain's/King's Men, who had built the Globe playhouse in 1599, acquired the lease of Blackfriars in 1608.¹³ Plague delayed all theatrical business until the fall of 1609, but presumably the King's Men then began to perceive their repertory in terms of both a small indoor playhouse and a large outdoor one. At about this time, the company started buying plays from the new collaborative team of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. Their innovation, the tragicomedy, contained masque elements and narrative motifs from the Greek romances. The First Folio (plus *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*) shows that many of Shakespeare's scripts in this period reflect the innovations of Beaumont and Fletcher. The chamber accounts of performances at Court, 1612–13,

record that nine of the twenty performances by the King's Men were given to plays in this general category: *Philaster* (twice), *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Tempest*, *A King and No King*, *The Twins Tragedy*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Nobleman*, and *Cardenio*. Yet many of the old repertory items remained popular. Performances of *The Knot of Fools*, *Much Ado about Nothing* (twice), *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, *Sir John Falstaff (Merry Wives of Windsor?)*, *Othello*, *Caesars Tragedye (Julius Caesar?)*, *A Bad Beginning Makes a Good Ending*, *The Captain*, *The Alchemist*, and *The Hotspur (I Henry IV?)* suggest the durability of the revenge play, classical history, chronicle history, magician play, and all varieties of comedy. A fire at the Globe on June 29, 1613, during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, destroyed the playbooks and apparel of the Chamberlain's/King's Men, but the company continued undiminished at Blackfriars and a rebuilt Globe, except by the loss of its long-time poet, William Shakespeare, who retired in the year of the fire and died in 1616.

Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, entered the titles of licensed plays in his office-book, 1622–42, and this list identifies the London playing companies and some of their repertory in the Stuart period. For the King's Men, Herbert issued licenses for fifty-six old and new plays for the company. For the Admiral's/Prince's/Palsgrave's Men, Herbert licensed fifteen plays, only one of which is extant (*The Duchess of Suffolk*, Q1631). A fire at the Fortune playhouse on Sunday, December 9, 1621, destroyed the company's playbooks and apparel; and, even though the playhouse was rebuilt and the company continued, the players from Elizabethan and Jacobean configurations of the company had retired or died. In one way or another, Christopher Beeston is the common denominator in the history of several companies for which Herbert licensed plays. Beeston, after managing Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull until 1617 or so, continued a theatrical enterprise at the Cockpit with players under the patronage of Prince Charles. Herbert licensed four plays for the company in 1623, which ceased to exist after its patron became king in 1625. At the Cockpit, Beeston replaced Prince Charles's Men with a company formerly of boys, Lady Elizabeth's Men. Before 1622, Lady Elizabeth's Men had played at the Swan, where they performed Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. Herbert licensed thirteen plays for Lady Elizabeth's Men from May 1622 to February 1635. Queen Henrietta's Men and Beeston's Boys were also ventures by Beeston, who died in 1638. Herbert licensed four plays for Queen Henrietta's Men, 1625–8, and ten in 1633–4; after 1637, another configuration of the company played at the Salisbury Court playhouse until 1642. Beeston's Boys, also known as the King and Queen's Young Company, appear in Herbert's office-book in 1636–7. After Beeston died, his son William managed Beeston's Boys, who played at the Cockpit.

If the identity of companies in the Stuart years was determined by repertory, staging, and versification, as Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean (1998) suggest was true in the heyday of the Queen's Men in 1583–92, there is little in the entries of licenses by Herbert to differentiate one company from another by the time the playhouses were officially closed in 1642. Evidence of a sameness is the employment of dramatists across company lines. Plays by Beaumont and Fletcher appear in the repertory of the King's Men, Lady Elizabeth's Men, Queen Henrietta's Men, and Beeston's Boys. Plays by Ford, or Dekker and Ford, appear in these repertories plus that of Palsgrave's Men. Plays by Heywood, Middleton, Massinger, Rowley, and Shirley are likewise ubiquitous. A few companies still were performing Marlowe and Shakespeare but the plays new in 1588 or 1590 or 1600 were now into their fourth decade of reruns. Therefore, after nearly seventy-five years of business, the early modern English playing companies and their repertories were blended into slight variations of one another.

NOTES

I am indebted throughout this chapter to Chambers (1923) and Gurr (1996); I refer readers to both for information on companies not discussed here and for further detail on those that are.

- 1 The title-page phrase is "ED. ALLEN ... [and] *Kemps applauded Merymentes*"; title-page advertisements are quoted from Greg (1939–59).
- 2 McMillin and MacLean (1998, xii) are speaking specifically of the Queen's Men in the 1580s.
- 3 Sussex's *William the Conqueror* may survive under the title *Fair Em*, which includes a plot with King William (however, the title-page of the quarto advertises Lord Strange's Men).
- 4 For a fuller description of the Newington playhouse enterprise, see Ingram (1992, 150–81), and David Kathman, Chapter 16 in this volume.
- 5 For a comprehensive study of the company, see McMillin and MacLean (1998). Unless otherwise noted, I rely on this source.
- 6 David Kathman has done extensive revisionary work on players' names as signs of company affiliation. For the latest arguments on the connections suggested here for players' names in the plot of 2 *Seven Deadly Sins* and the Pembroke texts, readers should consult Kathman (2004; 2009).
- 7 Greg (1904, 2: 152) suggests the title *Cloris and Ergasto*. For further information on these and other lost plays, readers should consult the Lost Plays Database (www.lostplays.org).
- 8 I omit *Titus Andronicus* from discussion in the belief that the attribution to Pembroke's company on the title-page of the quarto derives from the presence of some of Pembroke's players in the company of Sussex's Men in January 1594 when the play was performed at the Rose. Readers should remember that Pembroke's did not perform the folio versions (2 *Henry VI*, 3 *Henry VI*) so far as is known, even though those more familiar titles are used here to indicate that pair of plays in their initial publications: *Contention*, Q1594; *True Tragedy*, O1595.
- 9 Karl Wentersdorf (1977) attributes *Dr. Faustus*, *The Massacre at Paris*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *Arden of Faversham*, and *Richard III* to Pembroke's Men in 1592–3. The most recent analysis of Pembroke's Men, post-1593, is by Syme (2012).
- 10 I take the title-page of the 1594 quarto of *The Taming of a Shrew* at its word and assume that the accompanying printed text, not Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, was the play owned and performed by Pembroke's Men.
- 11 During a London performance in 1587, a feigned on-stage shooting went terribly wrong; a man in the audience was wounded, and a child and a pregnant woman were killed. The popular opinion among scholars has been that this incident is an indication that the play being performed was 2 *Tamburlaine*, but support for that opinion has waned (Gurr 2009, 8–10).
- 12 Scholars have long believed that Henslowe mistakenly entered the title here of Pembroke's play (*The Taming of a Shrew*), when it was rather Shakespeare's "Shrew" play that was being performed at Newington in June 1594, but opinion is shifting. The inclination currently is to trust Henslowe that the play performed was indeed *The Taming of a Shrew*.
- 13 James Burbage had bought Blackfriars on February 4, 1596, shortly before his death; Richard Burbage inherited it, but leased it to Evans until Evans relinquished the lease in 1608.

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Rehearsal and Acting Practice

Don Weingust

Live stage performance is among the most ephemeral of endeavors. By its nature, historical understandings of it must be drawn from other media. Especially when considering an age before electronic, film, or wax-cylinder recording, and too distant in time for first-hand recollection, one must rely upon information even further removed from the live event. While such artifacts from other media may sometimes give perhaps rudimentary and moment-specific clues as to *what* may have taken place, they almost never provide any hard evidence of *how*.

Because there is such a dearth of information about performance in Shakespeare's theaters and the minimal rehearsal that preceded it, writings on the topics of period rehearsal and acting practice tend to be significantly speculative. There is, however, much that we can know and come to appreciate about what clearly were the differences between the theater of Shakespeare's day and the theater of the present era. Those differences are significant.

In addition to what can be understood from documentary evidence, recent practice-as-research has the potential, if not to illuminate in a direct and complete way, then to shine some light on ways in which the theater of Shakespeare's day necessarily differed from mainstream theatrical practice today. A goal of gaining an understanding of such differences is in breaking what has been a long tradition of assumption, by theater scholars, audience members, and practitioners alike, that the theater of the present day is very much like that of Shakespeare's time. As long as we insist that they must have been rather like one another, even when today's mainstream practices significantly conflict with what is known of those in Shakespeare's own theaters, we limit our potential for understanding the differences in approaches to theatrical performance and the plays created for the period's specific theatrical conditions.

Rehearsal

Tiffany Stern's research (2000; 2001; 2012; 2014; 2015) suggests that the norm for quantities of rehearsal in the period is not terribly unlike that we have come to understand from the amateur approach to rehearsal depicted in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Before their performance, the craftsmen-players hold only a partial, single group rehearsal. Stern (2000, 46–123) suggests that while there was at least some variability, the single group rehearsal before a first performance was the professional norm as well. Awareness of this crucial quantity tells us a great deal about the nature of performance in Shakespeare's day, both what it may have been like and particularly, what it may not have been like. This topic will gain further consideration below.

Cognate with the nature of rehearsal in the period, and perhaps one of the most significant factors determining the quantities of rehearsal, was the nature of the repertory schedule in the Elizabethan/Jacobean theater.¹ Henslowe's so-called "diary" contains comprehensive logs of performance dates, plays performed, and box-office earnings, and from it we expect that the normal schedule in the public theaters generally involved the performance of six different plays per week, with a new play entering the repertoire every two weeks or so. The repertory featured long periods between repetitions of any given play, generally of two weeks or more, often with intervals of a month to several months, sometimes with even a year or more elapsing (Foakes and Rickert 1961; Greg 1907). To meet the demands of this schedule, an actor in the period needed to keep some thirty to forty or so plays in his head at any given time. As such, it is no wonder that the actor was anticipated to have awakened with the morning light and begun learning or relearning his part for the day's performance.² That part consisted of his lines and the brief cue words that would indicate when it was his turn to say them. With performances taking place in the afternoons, and the actors known to have gone to dine in the taverns afterward, rehearsal would need to take place in the mornings up through perhaps midday, before patrons started assembling for the afternoon's performance (Stern 2000, 78). The rigors of such a schedule would not allow for anything approaching the kinds of rehearsal quantities enjoyed by most later-modern stage actors preparing for production. Indeed, the notion of a performance of a play in the early modern period as a "production," perhaps outside of Court performance, is very much anachronistic. A "production" as understood in the present period entails amounts and kinds of preparation and consistency in performed repetition that likely would have been almost entirely foreign to the early modern actor. The notion that an early modern performance may have been an "old-timey" version of what one sees in a production of the present day elides the enormity of differences in their creation.

The Master of the Revels figured prominently in early modern actors' preparations, in that the playing companies were responsible for ensuring that actors learned and performed their parts as the text had been approved by the Crown's theatrical censor.³ Given the sometimes very brief period between acquisition of a play by a company and that play's first performance, the timing could be somewhat tricky. Especially for a play to be performed imminently, actors might receive their parts prior to the Master having a chance to censor it, and then the players would be required to relearn anything he may have altered. In addition to the modest group preparation that the actors undertook to ready a play for the stage, plays sometimes received another kind of hearing, also referred to as a rehearsal, which was more of an audition. Along with being the censor, the Master of the Revels was responsible for selecting and preparing plays for Court performance. When Henslowe, the proprietor of the Rose, a playhouse just across the street from and a rival to Shakespeare's own Globe, threatened to fine the actor Robert Dawes should he miss

rehearsal (Chambers [1923] 1951, 2: 256), we expect the reference to be to the company's own preparation, but it also could have referred to a hearing before the Master of the Revels selecting plays for the holiday season at Court.

The play as a whole may only have been spoken aloud in full, and in anyone's presence, once or twice prior to its first performance, and not by the actors. It was common for a playwright to read the play to a company's sharers (its financial partners, generally also its principal actors) when they were about to purchase it, at which transfer the playwright ceded all rights and interests in the work to the company. An additional reading by the playwright may have been organized for the benefit of other important members of the playing company, and this reading when it took place may have been a part of the playwright's instruction to the players.

As depicted in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, actors would then go off and con their parts, committing them to memory as best they could in the time allotted, and, in the process, determine upon any particular ways of rendering those lines or associated actions they might hope to perform. The contingent nature of this preparation had to do in part with the small amount and likely nature of group rehearsal, which would leave the actors not knowing in advance what the others might be choosing to do, or how those choices might mesh. As with a later-modern improvisatory player, flexibility would seem to have been a key to an actor's performance in the period.

What was the nature of the single group rehearsal that the company would hold prior to the first performance of a play? We may gain some hints about preparation from our understandings of components of early modern performance, and knowledge that a single group rehearsal in the morning would not afford time to work through the entirety of the play in ways that are familiar to actors in standard later-modern rehearsals. Elements crucially requiring attention would include fights, dances, and songs. These three aspects of performance may well have commanded much of the available time. Likewise needing some attention would be any special effects, whether to do with Jupiter's thunderbolt in *Cymbeline* (TLN 3126–8), or the sudden disappearance of the banquet in *The Tempest* (TLN 1583–5).⁴ The use and placement of any movable, performance-specific augmentations to the stage would require an understanding of who would be responsible for getting such items on and off of the stage, when, and by what means. Such pieces would include beds, thrones or, perhaps, if a two-level *frons scenae* itself was not available or employed for such purpose, mansions (movable, elevated stage platforms) that could suggest the likes of Cleopatra's monument or Juliet's balcony.

Grouped entrances and exits may well have required some preparatory attention. We do not now know if early modern theatrical semiology – ways of creating meaning from stage pictures – dictated consistencies of entrance and exit locations as a part of narrative strategy, nor can we be certain if conventions of stage use determined use of specific locations and timings. We do know, however, that one or more actors seeking to enter a stage from the same place where others are trying to exit poses logistical challenges and affords both dramatic and perhaps undesired comic potential. As such, some choice-making was required, either as a matter of customary practice or performance-specific planning.

One might well also expect that the use of the trap in the stage floor might have suggested some cooperative advance planning, either with regard to timing or at least to ensure that an actor standing atop it might not prevent its safely opening. Likewise, the trap in the heavens, the underside of the roof over the stage, and its related machinery used to lower an actor toward the stage, such as for Jupiter's arrival on his eagle with the aforementioned thunderbolt in *Cymbeline*, would have been a crucial part of the technical apparatus of the performance space, requiring for

its use both advance planning and attention to matters of safety. An actor botching an entrance on the main stage level might impact a performance's timing or gain for himself some mild personal embarrassment; an actor botching an entrance from the trap in the heavens might unwittingly be making his final turn on the great stage of life.

Acting Practice

In addition to those material conditions affecting rehearsal in Shakespeare's day, there are a number of conditions significantly affecting performance. Gurr and Ichikawa have suggested that "There is not very much direct evidence about the style of acting that developed from the 1590s onwards" (2011, 70). Likewise, only a little of the historically informed practice-as-research has dealt specifically with acting style. One of the crucial aspects of performance from Shakespeare's day that has not meaningfully been explored through practice of the present has to do with the question of "personating." An oft-quoted remark on the subject comes from Sir Thomas Overbury, who, in his 1615 *Characters*, says of Shakespeare's leading player, Richard Burbage, that "what we see him personate, we think truly done before us" (sig. N2). Except perhaps with regard to the term "personate," which referred to enacting or impersonating, this statement seems rather straightforward, but it may be more difficult to penetrate from a later-modern perspective than may appear at first glance. Overbury's "truly done" seems to express an anticipated "real" quality to the playing of Burbage, and perhaps his fellows. There may be no term related to representation, and especially the ephemerality of theatrical representation, that is more loaded, or more likely to be considered differently in different theatrical eras.

We know that the fictive event of dramatic representation is truly "real" only in its nature as a fictive event and its effects upon its participants and witnesses. We therefore are left to determine just what that loaded term "real" might mean when it applies to the description of dramatic representation. Even a cursory view of performance history makes clear that one generation's notions of the "real" in representation were regularly supplanted by those of the next, with the earlier version seeming later to be stylized or affected and indeed anything but "real" (substitute a term more appropriate for the rhetoric of the chosen day: including, for example, "natural," "decorous," "actual," etc.). While the proximity of the earlier-favored style of performance to actual behavior was likely to have changed, it may have done so rather less than did a society's sense of how it wished to find itself represented in media of performance and in styles of rhetoric used in discussing it. Daniel Day-Lewis may seem among the more actual of actors today, and indeed he goes to great lengths to accomplish his rendering of a sense of actuality, but yesterday's more actual performer was Laurence Olivier, including as an African Othello, and not so long before it was David Garrick, with his fright wig. Accordingly, we must be prepared to accept that the actual of today may well appear entirely other than actual tomorrow. As good a job as the techniques of Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg do for enabling actors to create a sense of the actual for audiences today, to anticipate that these techniques will provide the means of depicting society's understandings of the actual for all time would be grossly to underhistoricize the present period.

Hand-in-hand with the notion of the "real" in performance of Shakespeare's day is the question of just what may have been meant by "passionating" in the period. Cary Mazer (2012) suggests that the idea of an actor feeling the emotions onstage that he or she is charged with conveying on behalf of the character hails from the eras of Stanislavskian and post-Stanislavskian

techniques. In counterpoint to Mazer's argument, Tiffany Stern (2012) draws on sources from classical Greek and Roman theater, as well as those of the early modern period, evidencing actors feeling actual emotion onstage as a part of "personating" their roles. While avoiding claims for a "universal" in performance, Stern persuasively argues that the feeling of actual emotion onstage may well link the modern-day Stanislavskian actor to some actors of Shakespeare's own period. As Stern suggests, embodying passion, expressing felt passion, seems as old as western theater, and perhaps more pervasive than one might expect. In her response to Mazer, Stern pits Dustin Hoffman and Laurence Olivier against one another as examples of actually felt versus merely suggested displays of emotion, yet even Olivier seems to have employed techniques attuned with those of Hoffman, Hoffman's teacher Lee Strasberg, and Strasberg's acting inspiration, Konstantin Stanislavski.

While working on John Schlesinger's film *Marathon Man* (1976), Hoffman reportedly remained awake for some forty-eight straight hours to achieve a kind of edginess before filming the torture-by-dentistry scene with Olivier. As they began work on the scene, Olivier is said to have quipped to his younger colleague something to the effect of "You should try acting, dear boy. You might find that you rather enjoy it." The British director Jonathan Miller, however, tells a story that may reveal a greater affinity between the two actors than Olivier's ridicule of the method and advice to Hoffman might suggest. When working together on *The Merchant of Venice*, Miller asked Lord Olivier what he was thinking about when, after his Shylock's exit at the end of Act 4 (TLN 2320), Olivier let out the long, disconsolate, offstage wail expressive of the shattering of his character's bulk, and foreshadowing Miller's use of the Jewish prayer for the dead which followed. Miller reported that Olivier claimed to be thinking of "all of the foxes in the world in traps."⁵ Hoffman would recognize that technical application as a classic method "substitution," intended to evoke an honestly (actual) emotional response on the part of the actor to represent a cognate emotional state of the character. In so doing, Stern might suggest that each of Hoffman and Olivier had an affinity with the actors of Shakespeare's day.

Perhaps a larger question might have to do with just what it meant to express emotion on the early modern stage, both for the actor and to the audience member, given evidence that early modern notions of subjectivity – what the experience of personhood may have been like in that culturally and temporally distant milieu – were quite different indeed than such notions today. There does seem to be evidence of malleable distinctions between actor and character in Shakespeare's day, not only from the metatheatricity suggested in Renaissance texts and doubling of actors' characters, but also in reports of actors dropping character or attentiveness once finished with their own specific lines, but remaining on stage. The nature and rarity of such reports suggest that, even if we have a difficult time understanding fully what it meant, maintaining a sense of character on the early modern stage was the norm.

Another area of contention impacting understandings of the nature of performance on the early modern stage has to do with the amounts of time given to performance, the pace of playing in the period, and the consequent amounts of text able to be performed during the allotted times. This question is one central to the arguments of Lukas Erne (2003), who claims, based upon a pace of play suggested by Alfred Hart (1942), who arrived at his estimations from reading the plays out loud to himself, that many of Shakespeare's plays must have been far too long to perform in what Erne considers to have been the allotted time, and thus must have been intended in their entirety only for print. This argument fails to persuade on several key points. First, the estimate of pace of playing by Hart has no bearing on what may have been the actual paces played by Shakespeare and his fellows. Second, considering a normal playing time to be of two

hours' duration does not take into account the fact that plays were known to have been allotted not just two hours, but some two to three hours or so, and that in constructions of just what constituted an hour in Shakespeare's day, where clocks were unlikely to feature minute hands, an hour might still be considered to be the current one until the following hour had sounded (e.g., something short of three full hours' time may still have been considered to be of two hours' duration).⁶ The amounts of text learned and played by Shakespeare's actors may have been much more than some scholars anticipate. Indeed, if playing paces were only slightly faster than those of the present day, when methods of acting, scene changes and attention to verse-playing are all much different and likely result in significantly slower overall paces, the playing of full, or nearly full texts of Shakespeare's plays would have been reasonably easy to accomplish and may well have been the norm.

Looking Backward, Playing Forward

The attempt to understand early modern performance through later-modern practice has been a part of Shakespearean performance for over a hundred years. One of the first significant practitioners at the turn of the twentieth century was William Poel, whose Elizabethan Stage Society employed copies of quarto versions of the texts as printed during Shakespeare's lifetime, and attempted replicas of Elizabethan theatrical structures. Poel's Elizabethan theater mock-ups never found their ways beyond the proscenium stages on which they were erected, and while the quarto-based texts from which he played hailed from Shakespeare's time, they may not have reflected well the texts as used in the playhouse. Poel's efforts, however, inspired many theatrical practitioners of the period, including B. Iden Payne, Harley Granville-Barker, and through Poel's nephew at Cambridge University, Sir Peter Hall and John Barton, founders of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

As a result of an ultimately happy accident of weather that forced a performance of *Hamlet* at Elsinore into a ballroom somewhat small for the purpose, Sir Tyrone Guthrie packed audience members into a more efficient and intimate thrust configuration, and thus the idea was born for the Guthrie thrust stages that appeared throughout North America and in the United Kingdom from about the middle of the twentieth century, including at theaters in Stratford, Ontario, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Chichester, West Sussex, and as the Olivier stage of the National Theatre in London. Guthrie's break from proscenium orientations forever changed understandings of the spatial relationships available in early modern plays, the open stage's potential for continuous action, and its capacity for enabling alternatives to realistic, representational settings and technical approaches. Guthrie's influence, and the popularity of Shakespeare's Globe on London's Bankside, may well be responsible for the Royal Shakespeare Company no longer having even a single proscenium stage in its three-theater complex in Stratford-upon-Avon.

For a brief example of the differences in intimacy available in the different configurations, one may compare two London homes for Shakespeare: the Barbican and Shakespeare's Globe. The proscenium-arch Barbican, though relatively intimate for prosceniums of its size, is enormous, especially inclusive of its massive stage, cavernous in a way few caves can claim. It seats some 1,150 patrons, who can be at much greater remove from the stage than those at Shakespeare's Globe. Even with the Globe's almost 50 percent greater capacity of 1,700 patrons, none of the audience members there are more than about forty feet from the stage. In Shakespeare's day, a somewhat smaller version of such a space, where all patrons may have been within thirty feet of

the stage, would have held between 2,500 and 3,000 persons, or two and a half to three times the capacity of the Barbican, and these many more patrons would have been at least twice as close to the action as those at the Barbican.

Poel's hearkening back to early printed versions influenced several later practitioners who have exploited the opportunities of early texts for understanding better Shakespeare's dramaturgy. In addition to Hall and Barton, the prominent voice teachers Cicely Berry, Patsy Rodenburg, and Kristin Linklater have developed vocal and textual approaches for actors that urge them away from more colloquial, everyday ways of rendering these texts and into closer touch with the opportunities of verse speaking.⁷ Going a step further, Neil Freeman (1994) and Patrick Tucker (2002) have exploited the specific materiality of First Folio texts for guiding actors in their rhetorical and action potentials (see also Weingust 2006).

Mark Rylance, with his company Phoebus' Cart and as inaugural Artistic Director at Shakespeare's Globe, together with Patrick Tucker and his London-based Original Shakespeare Company, sought to discover a number of the material and practical aspects of early modern theater that might be pursued in the present era (Kiernan 1999; Tucker 2002; Weingust 2006; Carson and Karim-Cooper 2008). Many other practitioners, from the United Kingdom to the United States and Australia, have followed the leads of these practitioners in seeking what might be learned of Shakespeare and his works through the pursuit of practices modeled on understandings of Shakespeare's own.

Performance; Practice as Research

The performance movement known under the aegis of "original practices" may be described in brief as an attempt by some present-day theater-makers to do Shakespeare in the ways they believe Shakespeare did Shakespeare.⁸ Despite its theoretical and practical challenges, the movement has a great deal to offer about the nature of live performance in present-day dramatic media, potential for relationships between performers engaged in acts of dramatic representation and their audiences, and, just possibly, some bits of information that can aid understandings of at least some aspects of the early modern theater. It is crucial, however, for scholars to be absolutely clear about the nature and limits of the inquiry, to avoid obfuscating more than might be understood. It is also important to steer clear of some of the claims to types of authority that have been attributed to the movement, if not regularly or necessarily made by its practitioners or scholarly interpreters.

With present-day theaters and present-day actors and even present-day understandings of texts that are as "original" as may be determined, it is impossible to do anything other than present-day theater, whatever its form or styles. The very title of "original practices" suggests that the movement is something that it cannot be, namely the presentation of practices as they were originally engaged in during the early modern period. These practices are indeed original, but, as I have written elsewhere, are fully and only so with regard to the period in which they are actually performed (see, for example, Weingust 2013b; 2014). As such, and also as I have proposed (Weingust 2013b; 2014), the movement and its scholarly considerers may do well to abandon the term "original practices" for "historically informed performance," following the practice now prevalent in what formerly had been referred to by some as "early music." What is taking place in present-day theaters allied with the movement may in some ways harken back to things old, but is decidedly a new, present-day series of approaches to performance.

The remainder of this chapter will use the term “historically informed performance” (sometimes shortened to HIP) to refer to the movement otherwise known as “original practices.”

In writing about the impossibility of discovering an authentically Shakespearean text, Gary Taylor (1993) mentions the bibliographer’s aim of achieving at least some kind of “proximity” to it. Historically informed performance might make the work more proximate to Shakespeare’s own, but perhaps is most useful in describing distance: the distance between Shakespeare’s theater and our own. I wish to state in no uncertain terms that examining historically informed performance in order to gain at least some purchase on the differences between early modern and later-modern performance by no means demonstrates unequivocally the specific natures of early modern performance. It does not. What it can confidently do is point to areas of likely difference between Shakespeare’s own practices and those more common today, as it expresses the phenomenological potential for later-modern theatrical performance.

What we can know from observing the efforts of later-modern actors engaging with these practices is how the results of these ways of working differ from the results of actors – sometimes the same actors – *not* so engaging with these practices. In the differences resulting from the different practices, we can gain some enhanced capacity for considering some of the ways in which Shakespeare as theater-maker was not, and would not have considered himself to be, our contemporary.

The exercise of historically informed performance, like all theatrical performance, is of course about entertaining its audiences, but also is about disrupting familiarity and expectation, and thus providing some perspective on currently dominant approaches to theater-making. For contextualizing one’s own period, perspective is crucial; there is no more difficult place or time on which to gain perspective than the here and now.

Practices engaged by historically informed practitioners address differences in what is known of specific elements of preparation and production from Shakespeare’s time to the present. These elements include amounts of rehearsal; playing in light common between acting and audience spaces, and resultant audience interaction; use of actors’ parts rather than full texts of plays, and matters of memorization and prompting; reconstructions of early modern playing spaces, or the use of extant early modern spaces; preparation and performance without the influences of a director, significant scene changes or movement determined in advance; the use of early modern versions of texts; reconstructed early modern costuming; employment of single-gendered casts; and so-called “original pronunciation.” These aspects of historically informed performance, discussed below, seek to reengage with at least some of the practices lost to varying degrees at and after the English Interregnum. As Gurr and Ichikawa have suggested, “The long-developing traditions of Shakespearean playing was broken in 1642, and since then 300 years of new traditions, especially in the technicalities of theater design and stage presentation, have brought performances of Shakespeare a long way from their origins in daylight and bare platform stages” (2011, 33).

Amounts of Rehearsal

Perhaps the most influential factor in determining what a particular theatrical event will look and sound like is the means by which it is prepared for the stage. Whether West End or Broadway, touring or regional-repertory, most standard productions of Shakespeare today, at least of a reasonably high professional level, are developed through extensive amounts of group rehearsal.

Actors generally begin this process not having fully committed their lines to memory, but complete this task over the early weeks of rehearsal. They rarely make specific efforts to commit cues to memory, as they are able to learn them in the process of following along in their complete copies of play-texts as they see and hear their fellows deliver those cues, including through gesture and other action, and as part of creating, rehearsing and learning the rhythms of the scenes that they are playing. Much of later-modern actors' learning and reinforcing of lines, and especially cues, occurs during the act of group rehearsal. A director will impose a larger vision on the overall production, which sometimes includes a guiding metaphor, determine in advance or work with the actors to set movement patterns and stage business, and work individually, especially with some leading actors and particularly in groups or small groups, on individual scenes or portions of scenes to cull out the dramatic possibilities and deepen and develop each particular group of stage moments, or "beats." As the rehearsal process progresses, the director will work with the actors on pacing and discovering and further texturing the rhythms of the piece, lead the actors through runs of sections of the play, acts, and then the entire play, and finally shepherd the actors through costume and technical rehearsals. This latter phase provides the opportunity for designers, and for directors working in collaboration with them, to build and refine lighting, projection and sound cues, together with any changes to the set. After one or several, or sometimes as many as three weeks' worth of preview performances – still considered rehearsals by the company, with the director continuing to provide notes to actors and others after each – the production, which at this stage is not simply a one-off performance but highly developed, will open to a general audience and theatrical critics.

Observation of companies working according to the known rehearsal quantities of the early modern period shows that essentially none of these common later-modern stages of preparation similarly pertain. In the single group rehearsal allotted, as was the case in early modern theater, a company is able to do little more than work on songs, dances and fights, and perhaps hold the equivalent of an actorly cue-to-cue, where entrance and exit locations and the bringing on of furniture or any other absolutely necessary set pieces may be worked out with the least amount of time and attention required. Given the bounds of such limited group focus, when the play opens before its audience, there will have been no time for actors to run and develop scenes with one another, no time for deepening moments, and actors will not have the luxury of learning their lines with one another, or of even beginning to gain significant familiarity with, let alone being able to commit to memory, the lines belonging to the other actors. Indeed, not having had the opportunity to test their learning of lines in the crucible of rehearsal – while they are all thinking about many things other than just lines – memorization is almost certain to prove incomplete. As anyone who has participated in or witnessed a first off-book rehearsal can attest, the first time that a group of actors tries to get through an entire play without texts in hand is a rough and ready, some might suggest shoddy, affair, and one from which subsequent rehearsal must seek to recover. At a first off-book run, even the best of memorizers find themselves requiring the assistance of a prompter, a role usually undertaken by an assistant stage manager.

Also under such conditions of extremely limited group rehearsal, the actor is in control of his or her movement and choices about ways of playing interactions with others, having had neither the director to influence such choices nor the rehearsal opportunity to work them out with others. Especially without a comprehensive knowledge of the play or what others will do, a performance so prepared is filled with discoveries by the actors, and these discoveries become a part of the performance and are shared in real time with the audience for whom they are created.

The event takes on an immediacy and spontaneity that cannot be matched in conventionally rehearsed performance, perhaps part of the reason why first performances in Shakespeare's day were charged at twice the normal rates. More than any other single element, the differences brought about by engaging in a full, later-modern rehearsal process of one to two months, versus a single group rehearsal, impact with extraordinary significance the nature of the performance created. As such, we must conclude that performances on Shakespeare's stages were entirely different from performances on almost all mainstream stages today. Expectations of a similarity in acting style, actor interaction and smoothness and polish known in later-modern performance are dashed on the rocks of theatrical practicality.

Playing in Common Light

Whereas traditionally performed later-modern productions rely on a separation between actor and audience not only through delineations of physical space, usually in proscenium orientations, but also through the designed and tightly controlled use of lighting, the early modern stage knew little of such hard-and-fast distinctions. Performances in the public playhouses of Shakespeare's day took place in the open air, and under direct and ambient sunlight shared by all, whether on stage or off. As can be observed from companies working under such common lighting, or even at daytime Shakespeare-in-the-park types of performances, the choice to avoid controlling the lighting milieu and avoid using it to separate actor and audience changes nearly everything about the relationships possible between those on stage and off. Companies working in such unitary lighting conditions tend to interact much more significantly with their audiences, and their audiences also tend to react and interact more fully. When an actor is delivering a soliloquy to a darkened auditorium, that actor is interacting with a largely imaginary audience, save for the sounds she or he may pick up from them, and perhaps her or his vision of the first row or so of audience members lit by the spill from the stage lighting. An actor in common light can see audience members' reactions every bit as clearly as audience members can see that actor's actions. It sometimes can be easier for an actor to feel comfortable in the blinding spotlight than to be perhaps less brightly lit, but able to see fully who is watching, and specifically how the watchers are reacting. Relationships develop in common lighting that cannot develop otherwise. Likewise, audience members' abilities to see one another, especially in three-quarter-round or fully round configurations, make the performance more of a shared event, something much more difficult to develop in a darkened auditorium where patrons are all facing in the same direction and able only to see the backs of others' heads.

Use of Actors' Parts, and Matters of Memorization and Prompting

When an actor possesses a full copy of the text of a play and can cull characterologic clues from its entirety, as well as gain a sense of what that actor's colleagues are likely to do during the course of rehearsal and performance, there is often only little left to mystery when the actors come together. Such fuller textual information can be crucial in the later-modern theater, where playwrights such as Anton Chekhov have crafted plays in which the understanding and playing of subtext is crucially informative for the audience's experience of the dramatic narrative. By and large, Shakespeare did not write subtext. His characters sometimes dissemble, but rarely will do

something such as launch into a speech ostensibly directed to a bookcase, or mutter about the weather, while desiring something unrelated to that speech from another character in the scene. Developing subtextually inflected performance is entirely possible in part-based acting, subtext often being a matter of individual character's "internal monologues," but in Shakespeare the lines almost always directly express the character's desires. An actor can do justice to a part without knowing in advance what the others will say. Shakespeare understood the medium of transmission of his texts – actors receiving only their lines and cues – and wrote for that specific mode of transmission. Indeed, Shakespeare seemed to write in his texts moments that, through the use of part-based acting, sometimes placed the actor in a similar position to the character, what I have referred to elsewhere (2013a) as "proto-Stanislvskian moments," or anticipations of Stanislavskian-type reaction to stimulus resulting from the actors' ignorance (or perhaps better framed, focus), knowing only that actor's part.

According to Palfrey and Stern (2007, 16), medieval actors' parts contained the actors' lines but not their cues, suggesting an alternative form of cueing, in a period where the prompter is expected to have stood on the stage and may well have conducted the performance, indicating which actor was next to speak. The development of textual cues in early modern parts suggests the development of certain preparatory and/or performance practice, for which such textual cues would be crucial (as absent their necessity, they would be unlikely to have become a feature of the early modern actor's part).

The question of the role of the prompter is crucially tied to the practice of part-based acting, and the standard amounts of group rehearsal in the early modern professional theater. Gurr and Ichikawa claim: "As we have seen, there was no regular prompter, since the strong physical structure of the oak-made *frons scenae* which provided the entry-points for the open stages of the first playhouses made it difficult for anyone behind it to hear what was being said on stage" (2011, 43). This estimation has some strong connection with understandings of the likely material structure of Shakespeare's theater, but would seem little connected with the practical demands of preparation and performance as are known to have been undertaken in the period. Gurr and Ichikawa also suggest that

once a player was out on the stage what followed was his own affair. *A forgetful player might get some help from his fellows if he forgot his lines*, but the book-keeper left him to his own devices, not even noting when or how he should make his exit. The most frequent occasion when the full text with the Master's signature was cut was whenever a player forgot his lines. (2011, 43; emphasis added)

The assumption that heaviness of the oak *frons*, difficult to hear through, meant that there was no prompting on the Globe stage ignores the realities of what happens when actors do not rehearse as today. In the repertory schedule of Shakespeare's day, individual plays were repeated sequentially only very rarely, and actors with only their own parts and not full play-texts did not have the opportunity to hear one another's lines enough times over a small space of time to commit to memory lines other than their own, sufficient to cover for one another if a line or cue was missed or mistaken. Any suggestion that an early modern actor working under such conditions could assist a fellow actor, with lines he would not have known, is to layer onto early modern practice the sensibilities drawn from the very different practices of the later-modern theater. The early modern actor did not have the luxuries of time and repetition of a later-modern actor, and accustomed to working as they were, likely would have had very little desire for them. Part-based acting, of plays essentially not group-rehearsed and each performed rarely more frequently than

once in a two-week period, simply requires the presence of a prompter. If the acoustical impenetrability of the Shakespearean stage *frons* argues against a prompter being concealed behind that *frons*, then the prompter simply must have been in front of it, or as Tiffany Stern (2001) has suggested, in a space aligned with the *frons*, but generally out of the direct view of the audience, behind the centrally hung arras. Such a position would enable bidirectional audibility with actors on the stage, and the chance to peek through or around the arras when necessary for the prompter also to see what was taking place on the stage. According to Palfrey and Stern (2007, 73), the prompter's task was not only to assist with missed lines, but also perhaps actions, and as such, the prompter would need to be in some touch with just what actions were taking place on the stage.⁹ If the early modern theater did not actually make use of a prompter, then there would have been no such position, nor the myriad references to it and to prompting in the period. However, what is absolutely clear from the nature and timing of early modern part study and performance preparation is that a prompter was necessary.

Today, theatergoers are accustomed to actors knowing their lines very well by the time a production opens, and knowing reasonably well the lines of their fellows, whom they might help out in a pinch. That condition, however, is a direct result of the ways in which productions are put together in the present era. Any experienced present-day actor, director or stage manager can give one a sense of when, during the course of a rehearsal process, the actors know what one another will do and say well enough to be able to help others out. That point begins to arrive much later in the rehearsal process than early modern actors ever came close to in theirs, or would have achieved even after a large number of performances, given the nature of the early modern repertory schedule. Assumptions about actors of the period as having superhuman mnemonic recollection seem simply an inversion of the wonderment audience members often display during question-and-answer sessions at post-performance actor talk-backs, when an almost inevitable question is, "How did you learn all of those lines?"

I would challenge any producer of theater to adopt fully the known conditions of early modern preparation and performance and attempt them without a prompter. The results would be excruciating, for those both on stage and off. If positioning a prompter where he or she could hear and be heard may seem indelicate to the sensibilities of the later-modern theatergoer or theater scholar, such sensibilities would seem to result from a presentist denial of the necessity of practice as conducted in the early modern theater.

In addition to gaining assistance from the prompter, actors would be buoyed by the ability to refer to a copy of the platt of the play (sometimes referred to as a plot) hanging on a peg backstage, in the tiring house. This document would contain a list of scenes and the characters in them, together with stage properties needed, to help the actors and tiring men to keep better track of where they were in the play.

Performances in Reconstructed and Extant Early Modern Playing Spaces

That the theaters of the early modern period were in many ways different from those of the later modern is axiomatic. The specifics of those differences would affect the work of the actor and the experience of the audience. Early modern theaters generally were constructed primarily from oak, along with lime and roughcast for walls. The acoustical properties of an oaken building are quite different than those of buildings made largely of synthetic materials. A large oaken stage becomes something of a sounding board for performance, and the density of hardwood in those

spaces creates an acoustically quite-bright environment. Indeed, the Blackfriars Playhouse at the American Shakespeare Center in Virginia is perhaps acoustically too bright, too lively a space for the bouncing of actors' voices, until it is filled with patrons, whose acoustically less-reflective bodies absorb sufficient amounts of sound to tune the room exquisitely. Watching and hearing a play performed in the recently constructed indoor Sam Wanamaker Playhouse at Shakespeare's Globe feels something like experiencing a play from the inside of a very large guitar. In such a space, an actor's clarity of articulation becomes far more important than the level of volume.

Beyond acoustics, the sizes of most early modern playhouses lent themselves to kinds of intimacy unknown in West End or Broadway theaters of similar capacity. While the original Globe theater was known to hold some 2,500 or more patrons, none sat or stood at greater than a forty-foot, possibly just thirty-foot, remove from the stage (see Kathman, Chapter 16 in this volume). This proximity was accomplished in the public playhouses by stacking galleries one on top of another, three in all, along with maintaining an open yard at the base level of the theater that could accommodate a large number of standing patrons, paying the theater's lowest admission price. The stage would extend approximately halfway into the standing area. By contrast, audience members at a later-modern proscenium theater can easily sit at multiple hundreds of feet from the stage. Early modern spaces, whether open-to-air or indoor, provided visual environments under common light, or nearly common light, generally not experienced in professional venues today. Other than at the Shakespeare's Globe reconstruction on London's Bankside or at a few high-level in-the-park settings that do not suspend or postpone performance because of rain, few attend high-level professional theatrical performances today where weather can be a factor in the appreciation of a performance, as it was at the birth of western theater on a hillside in ancient Athens.

A sense of what the interior of an early modern public playhouse may have looked like, and perhaps even how actors may have used it, can be gained from the drawing of the interior of the Swan, as copied in Arend van Buchell's diary from a letter sent to him by Johannes de Witt, who attended a performance there (see Figure 16.1 in Chapter 16). This drawing is particularly compelling for a practitioner of theater, in that the actors depicted on the stage of the Swan are behaving as one could expect that actors working on a deep thrust stage might. One actor sits on a bench downstage, left of center, as another actor stands just upstage and slightly to the other actor's right, in a diagonal line, favorable for playing on a deep thrust stage. A third actor appears to be in motion, downstage-left of the other two, reinforcing the long diagonal line that enables the greatest visibility to patrons. The actor in motion appears to be circling below the other two, and toward the opposite side of stage. When two or more actors are playing together on a thrust stage, or even when a single actor is playing on a thrust stage featuring obstructions such as the Swan's roof-supporting pillars, the only way to ensure that the same audience members do not continue to have obstructed views is by keeping the action in motion. As such, the Swan drawing's representation of action makes excellent theatrical sense, and despite some of the challenges the drawing has in its depictions of the space of the theater, would seem to lend the drawing important theatrical credibility.

Preparation and Performance without the Influence of a Director

While the advent of the director is fairly recent in western theater, it is almost impossible to attend a production of a play today, including one by Shakespeare, that has not been significantly determined by a director's efforts. However foreign the concept of a director would have been to Shakespeare and his fellows, it is difficult for scholars and others to jettison the notion that an

early modern theatrical presentation would have looked and sounded much like theatrical presentations dominant today. Our presuppositions even infiltrate our vocabulary, whether it is a matter of using terms inherited from post-Shakespearean raked stages to refer to positions on the stages of Shakespeare's day (as I have done in the preceding paragraph with terms such as up- and downstage), or the likewise anachronistic term referring to the development of movement for performance, such as in references by Gurr and Ichikawa (2011, 40, 42) to performances being "blocked" in Shakespeare's day. Blocking is generally a directorial practice, even if undertaken only by actors, and per the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definitions 9(a) and (b) refers to the development of stage movement in rehearsal to be fleshed out and then repeated during performance. The quantity of available rehearsal time and the necessary tasks to be accomplished would have kept all but the smallest amounts of blocking from being attempted. The bulk of an actor's stage movement would almost certainly have needed to be created by the actor in the moment of performance, and the Elizabethan/Jacobean stage would have been likely to demonstrate a more fluid and flexible rather than fixed approach to staging.

Absent directors, designers, and the changeable scenery of the later-modern theater, performance in the early modern period would have demonstrated a continuous flow of action from scene to scene, all but without indications of scene changes or time taken to effect them. Likewise, actors working from their verse and prose, without directed rehearsal to develop and deepen stage moments, and particularly working with the technology of actors' parts, would be far less prone to pausing than would actors in the later-modern, realistic, prose-based rather than verse-based theater. As such, it would have been possible in Shakespeare's theater to play many more lines per hour than generally is the case today. Indeed, performance of Shakespearean plays in the latter twentieth and early twenty-first centuries tends to achieve a pace of some 1,000 lines per hour. Theaters that eschew significant pausing and scene changes are more likely to work at paces closer to 1,200 lines per hour, and some are able to play quite successfully at even faster rates. The likely much-more-rapid pace of play in Shakespeare's theaters creates the opportunity for playing far more text than some have suggested may have been the case.

Without a directorial emphasis on particular aspects of a play, and without the imposition of thematic foci or overarching metaphor, actors are more likely to direct their attention primarily to the text that they are learning and playing from, and to one another and their audiences. Shakespeare's theater did not exhibit anything like the heavily conceptual performance generally seen in mainstream professional production of his plays today.

The Use of Early Modern Versions of Texts

Later-modern printed editions of texts generally undergo significant changes from the early modern ones upon which they are based. Printing today requires adherence to grammatical and other norms, bringing kinds of consistencies to texts that are intended to make them more accessible to a reading audience. While dramatic texts from the early modern period were already beginning to exhibit features of texts as literature, they were in many ways more closely aligned with the original purposes for which they were created. Additionally, with malleable approaches to spelling and punctuation, including in ways that may more closely connect such texts with the spoken word, the unregularized texts from Shakespeare's lifetime and shortly thereafter may well reflect more of the orality and aurality of the stage. Particularly in texts of the First Folio, the first nearly complete dramatic works of Shakespeare, put together by two of the playwright's fellow shareholders in his acting company who had access to playhouse manuscripts, one may

find renderings of several of the plays that may be closer to the ways in which Shakespeare's company performed them. Considering the irregularities in early texts not just as inconsistencies needing conforming, or as potential stumbling blocks to later-modern readers' understandings, actors may find in those early texts opportunities for interpretation, emphasis, even playable action that does not survive into standard printed editions generally available today (Freeman 1994; Tucker 2002; Weingust 2006).

Reconstructed Early Modern Costuming

No group has embraced more fully the notion of playing early modern drama in reconstructions of early modern clothing than Phoebus' Cart, the company comprised of actor-director Mark Rylance, his wife Claire van Kampen, a historically informed musician, musical director, composer, director, and playwright, and Jenny Tiramani, dean of early modern costumers. In addition to their work elsewhere, this historically informed triumvirate made Shakespeare's Globe their primary base of operations when Rylance became its first Artistic Director. The detail of the work they undertook went as far as the recreation of Elizabethan underwear for actors in the Globe's opening production of *Henry V* (Kiernan 1999; Weingust 2006). Putting later-modern actors in recreations of early modern frocks as exact as could be fashioned revealed important information about actor movement possibilities, the time it takes to get in and out of such apparel, and its implications for the doubling that was a regular and sometimes metatheatrical feature of the early modern stage. Shakespeare's Globe's costume reconstructions brought a level of sartorial splendor to performance that reinforced for scholars and other theatergoers the importance of dress to the early modern theater, its most developed element of production.

Employment of Single-Gendered Casts

Actors today playing roles in clothing normally worn by those of another gender evoke associations among audience members that may in some small ways connect with the gender tensions of the early modern stage, but likely do more to suggest to present-day audiences the distance between our approaches to actorial representation and Shakespeare's. Plays signify differently depending upon the makeup of their casts. *The Taming of the Shrew*, for example, seems a much different play when performed today by a mixed cast, an all-male cast, or an all-female cast. Central questions in the present age about the play's violence and other misogyny can be read differently in all three casting scenarios. In the disruption of standard performance approaches may be hints to alternative ways of considering the plays, if not ones specifically aligned with modes of reception of Shakespeare's own audiences, who patronized a playing company featuring only adult and apprentice-age males.

So-Called "Original Pronunciation"

The "original pronunciation" movement relies on a variety of studies, including of isolated communities maintaining aspects of speech as it may have been practiced in the early modern period, and old texts and their spellings and rhyming schemes, to arrive at a sense of how the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries may have sounded in the era when they were first performed. Championed

by linguist David Crystal and his actor-son Ben, these practices present a version of spoken English that bears only slight resemblance to the sometimes elegant pronunciations that may be heard on the Royal Shakespeare Company's stages today (Crystal 2005; Crystal and Crystal 2011). Early modern actors, for example, sounded their terminal letters "r," and sounded them fully, making more sense perhaps of variant spellings such as "warre" for what we commonly today spell as "war." In original pronunciation one can hear rhyming couplets at the ends of scenes that no longer rhyme in later-modern pronunciation. The jokes that present-day actors sometimes seek to make out of present-day near-rhymes in speeches or letters of love give way to other actorial opportunities when such passages actually do rhyme. Shakespeare's players spoke the language in what might be considered a rougher, more visceral, what some suggest was an earthier way, a manner of delivery that sounds contrapuntal to the refined speech associated with more highbrow British culture today.

While little is known definitively about rehearsal and acting practice in Shakespeare's day, the material conditions of his stage can enable some insights into practices beyond the merely speculative. Later-modern practices that engage with what is known of the approaches to early modern practice can shed light on some of the differences between standard practices of the present day, and some of the ways in which Shakespeare's own theater must have differed markedly in approaches to crafting and presenting performance. The conclusions that we can draw make clear some of the ways in which Shakespeare, despite whichever other affinities with him we may wish to claim, was far from being our theatrical contemporary.

NOTES

- 1 For fuller consideration of the impact of the repertory schedule on performance in Shakespeare's day, see Weingust (2014). For a discussion of playing companies and their repertories in the period, see Roslyn L. Knutson, Chapter 18 in this volume.
- 2 In his *Fantasticks* of 1626, Nicholas Breton describes when different persons awake to begin their various types of work, with the actor arising at "seuen of the clocke" so that he might "conne his part" (sig. E4).
- 3 For more on theatrical censorship, see Richard Dutton, Chapter 17 in the present collection.
- 4 References to Shakespeare's plays are to *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*, originally published in 1968 (Hinman 1996), via the Through-Line Numbering (TLN) Hinman created for it as a standard reference to First Folio texts.
- 5 Miller shared this story with the present author and others while visiting a seminar hosted by Janet Adelman at the University of California at Berkeley in the mid-1990s.
- 6 For a discussion of clocks, bells, and time in Shakespeare's performances, see Weingust (forthcoming). For a persuasive discussion of playing times in Shakespeare's theaters, see Urkowitz (2012). For a discussion of considerations of hours in Shakespeare's England, see Stern (2015) or listen to Stern (2014).
- 7 Some representative works are Berry (1974; 1992), Rodenburg (1993; 2002), and Linklater (1976; 1992).
- 8 For a sense of the present writer's research efforts and biases on this subject, the reader may wish to consider Weingust (2006; 2010; 2013a; 2013b; 2014; 2016; and forthcoming).
- 9 According to Christine Ozanne, it is absolutely crucial to the execution of the prompter's duties to be able to see clearly the actors on the stage. Ozanne, who shared her observations with the author in conversation in London during August of 2015, has extensive experience in prompting part-based, minimally rehearsed actors through her work with Patrick Tucker's London-based original Shakespeare Company (OSC). Tucker is the director and teacher perhaps most influential among the current generation of HIP practitioners. His OSC, with Ozanne as prompter, gave what Shakespeare's Globe referred to as "experimental-slot" performances during each of the theater's first three seasons.

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Boy Companies and Private Theaters

Michael Shapiro

Throughout the sixteenth century, troupes of boy actors from London grammar schools and choirs performed plays in the banqueting halls of royal residences as part of the Court's annual season of winter revelry, which usually ran from late November to early February. Adult troupes performed as well, but only the children offered a special kind of pertness and audacity that played off against their supposed naivety and innocence. Roger Ascham, a prominent sixteenth-century educator, complained that upper-class English families encouraged such behavior (Shapiro 1977, 4). Elizabeth herself is thought to have enjoyed such cheekiness, a penchant which may account for the frequent appearances of boy companies at Court during the early part of her reign.¹

All court plays performed at Court, whether by boy companies or adult troupes, were organized by the Master of the Revels and often received logistical support from the Revels Office. Court accounts record payments to the schoolmasters and choirmasters who directed the boy companies, but it is unclear whether these payments represent compensation for production expenses, donations to the institutions (perhaps to help maintain the performers), supplementary income for the troupes' masters, or some combination of the above.

From 1560 to 1572, the years when Sir Thomas Benger served as Master of the Revels, thirty-four of the forty-five plays at Court were performed by one of the children's troupes (Streitberger 2009, 27). However, after Benger died in 1572, children's troupes appeared somewhat less often at Court, as the Queen was entertained more frequently by a handful of adult troupes under the patronage of powerful courtiers, and eventually by the Queen's Men, her own in-house troupe. Such consolidation may have been part of a campaign by Elizabeth's advisors to lighten the burden of financing royal entertainment on the Revels Office. The strategy was clear: reduce the number of Court masques and transfer the production costs of plays to the companies themselves (Streitberger 2009, 36). Adult troupes could offset these production costs by box office receipts, and they presumably had access to resources for transporting actors, costumes, and props,

as they did when they went on tour.² Boy companies, by contrast, were probably more reliant on the Revels Office (or the grammar schools and chapels that sponsored them) to bear these costs.

In the mid-1570s, while adult troupes were beginning to perform in large, open-roofed “public” theaters to audiences that numbered in the low thousands, several grammar school and chorister companies began to play before much smaller audiences in halls which eventually became known as “private theaters.” Some of them charged admission, possibly to offset the costs of production. Performances in London by all troupes, men or boys, were defended as necessary “rehearsals” so that the Queen could have plays for her winter entertainment. It is still not clear precisely when and how, at least for the boy companies, these rehearsals evolved into fully fledged commercial enterprises, as service to the Crown and personal profit are inextricably intertwined in the period. Indeed, even after the most illustrious of the boy companies, Children of the Chapel Royal and the Children of Paul’s, resumed playing around 1599 after an eight- or nine-year hiatus, and did so as commercial enterprises, their appeal still depended at least in part on the notion that they were purveyors of theatrical entertainment to the Court.

In the decade or more after this resumption of playing, children’s troupes filled a niche in the entertainment industry of early modern London. Earlier scholars like Harbage (1952) viewed the boy troupes as competitors of adult companies. More recent scholarship argues that because the children’s troupes generally played once a week in smaller theaters over a shorter season, they could not have competed seriously with adult troupes (Knutson 2001, 15–19, 134). Harbage also disparaged the owner-managers of boy companies for exploiting child labor for their own profit and for offering plays that he found sensationalistic, scurrilous, and salacious. More recent scholarship tends to accept the boy companies as part of the commercial theater of their own day and sees their repertoires in less moralistic terms (Bly 2000; Munro 2005; Lamb 2009; Shapiro 2009, 121–29).

The children’s troupes performed plays by most of the leading playwrights of the period (Shakespeare excepted), of which about seventy are extant. Although they occasionally attempted tragedies and tragicomedies (Munro 2005, 96–163), their repertoires were dominated by satiric comedies, for the combination of high-ranking spectators and saucy diminutive players evoked a spirit of mockery which could be directed at figures of authority in their plays and at those in the real world, at their audiences, at rival companies or playwrights, and even at themselves. Such mockery, which tended to become ever sharper, attracted spectators but sometimes brought legal action and rebukes from King James. However, in their brief but glittering heyday, the boy companies established the indoor playhouse as the norm for commercial theater in London, leading to the gradual abandonment of the larger open-roofed amphitheaters by their adult rivals.

Grammar Schools

Many humanist educators of the period believed that their pupils might develop poise and improve their skill in speaking Latin by acting in dialogues or even in entire plays, either those by Plautus or Terence or neo-Latin and vernacular imitations of Roman comedy. As early as 1527, Henry VIII and his guests were entertained by the students of the newly established grammar school at St. Paul’s Cathedral, who also performed before Cardinal Wolsey and his guests. Nicholas Udall brought his pupils from Westminster grammar school to play before Mary in 1554. One such occasion witnessed the performance of Udall’s original Terentian comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553–6).

The statutes of the Westminster grammar school dating from about 1560 require that the students perform a Latin play each year. On January 17, 1566, they presented *Sapientia Solomonis* before Queen Elizabeth and her guest, Queen Cecilia of Sweden, and other members of the Court circle. The previous year, the Queen had seen two Roman comedies at the school, Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* and Terence's *Heautontimorumenos*. *Sapientia Solomonis*, however, was a neo-Latin work by Sixt Birck, a German schoolmaster. The play dramatized the relationship between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, developing an allegorical parallel to the Queen of England and her royal visitor.

The Westminster performance of *Sapientia Solomonis* seems more like a gift offering than a commercial project. Elizabeth was the school's patron, having restored her father's support for the institution shortly after her accession. On this occasion, the troupe presented her with a richly decorated manuscript copy of the text bearing her arms on its vellum binding. The Abbey itself, along with the Revels Office, bore some of the expenses involved in supplying and transporting sets, props, and costumes. Thomas Brown, then headmaster at the school, was reimbursed for expenses by the Abbey, but no record of Court payment to him for staging the play has been found (Shapiro 2006, 120).

Richard Mulcaster, headmaster of the Merchant Taylors' grammar school from 1561 to 1586, encouraged acting on pedagogical grounds and often brought his pupils to perform before Elizabeth at Court in the 1570s and early 1580s (DeMolen 1972). For such performances, he used the Guildhall as a rehearsal space and charged admission of a penny until forbidden to do so by the Masters of the Guild in 1574, and thus established one of the first London "private theaters," that is, small indoor fee-charging playhouses. None of the plays performed by Mulcaster's Merchant Taylors' troupe survive, but the few extant titles, such as *Timoclea at the Siege of Troy*, indicate an interest in plays focusing on the plight of captive women. Mulcaster's Merchant Taylors' boys were the last grammar school troupe to entertain the Court. In 1596 he became headmaster of the grammar school at St. Paul's, but its students, as opposed to the Paul's chorister company, never performed at Court or in their own hall, nor is there any evidence that he was instrumental in the revival of playing at Paul's after 1599.

Chorister Troupes (1)

William Cornish, master of the Chapel Royal under the early Tudors, used adult and boy choristers in the entertainment he fashioned for his royal patrons. Like her father and grandfather, Elizabeth was entertained by her own Children of the Chapel Royal, but more frequently by the boy choristers from St. Paul's Cathedral, from the Chapel Royal at Windsor, and from Westminster Abbey. As boy choristers from all these institutions were highly trained in singing and in playing instruments, their plays were much richer in song and music than the plays by adult troupes (Shapiro 1977, 234–5; Austern 1992; Munro 2009).

The Children of Paul's was overseen by Sebastian Westcott, almoner and choirmaster from 1547 to 1583. He seems to have continued the theatrical tradition established by the previous almoner and choirmaster, John Redford, whose extant play *Wit and Science* (1531–47) was probably performed by the Children of Paul's. But it was Westcott who attracted Elizabeth's patronage. On February 12, 1552, he led Paul's choristers in an appearance before the then Princess Elizabeth at Hatfield House, her official residence, for which he received the rather large payment of £4 19s. After Elizabeth's accession in 1558, Westcott and the Paul's choirboys were

frequent entertainers at Court, appearing on about two dozen occasions over the next two decades. For these productions, Westcott was listed in the Court records as payee, and probably functioned as producer-director, and perhaps as playwright as well, although the only extant play ascribed to him is *The Marriage of Wit and Science*, a revision of Redford's *Wit and Science* (Lennam 1975, 90–2).

Westcott was granted the power to “impress,” that is, conscript, into his service talented boy choristers from any choir in the land, and on one occasion the Privy Council interceded when someone else tried to impress one of his choristers. Like Mulcaster, he had his children rehearse before paying customers, as is suggested by Westcott's will that records a bequest “to one Shephard that keepeth the door of plays” (Hillebrand 1926, 330). After much speculation about the location of this playhouse, it now appears that the chorister troupe at Paul's performed in a small hall, perhaps capable of accommodating fifty spectators, located in the almonry, a building under Westcott's control which abutted the Cathedral nave on its southern side (Bowers 2000; Berry 2000). Westcott, like Mulcaster, established a fee-charging indoor playhouse for his choristers to use when they rehearsed plays intended for Court performance, so that spectators in such playhouses might well have fancied themselves as one step away from participating in Court revelry. What Westcott, like Mulcaster and later Richard Farrant, “was selling was not only theatre but a restricted luxury – an atmosphere that simply reeked with class” (Astington 2014, 17).

Perhaps inspired by Mulcaster and Westcott, Richard Farrant was the first master of the Children of the Chapel Royal to obtain a space where his choristers could rehearse for their Court appearances. He did so by renting space in 1576 in Blackfriars, a former Dominican priory, where he established the first Blackfriars theater. It measured forty-six and a half feet by about twenty-six feet (Wickham, Berry, and Ingram 2000, 388) and could accommodate 120–130 spectators (Shapiro 1977, 35, 278 n. 6). When William Hunnis, master of the Children of the Chapel Royal, took a temporary leave from 1576 to 1580, his post was filled by Farrant, who, since 1564, had been master of the Children of the Chapel at Windsor, who had performed at Court under his direction. On January 6, 1577, the Court accounts record a joint performance of a lost play entitled *Mutius Scevola* by both the children of the Windsor Chapel and the Children of the Chapel Royal. Farrant's one extant play, *The Wars of Cyrus*, dramatizes the plight of Penthea, a royal captive, whose musical lamentations have also been preserved (Shapiro 1977, 239).

When Farrant died in 1580, Hunnis resumed his post as master of the Chapel Royal, acquired the lease to the first Blackfriars theater, and continued Farrant's practice of using it as rehearsal space for Court performance. For the next four years, the playhouse was evidently used by an amalgam of Chapel and Paul's choristers, who sometimes appeared at Court under the sponsorship of the Earl of Oxford and under the direction of his retainer, the playwright John Lyly. At one point in the early 1580s, Henry Evans, a scrivener and close friend of the late Westcott, became involved in the management of the troupe. Working on his own, or perhaps in partnership with Oxford and Lyly, Evans acquired the lease for the first Blackfriars theater from Hunnis and sold it to Oxford in June 1583. In 1584, however, the original owner of the property regained control of the Blackfriars playhouse and evicted the children's troupe, probably the same amalgam of boys from the Chapel Royal and Paul's who played under Oxford's name. Perhaps it was Evans' past association with Westcott at Paul's that permitted the combined troupe, or its Paul's contingent, now under the control of Westcott's successor, Thomas Giles, to shift its operations back to the playhouse on the Cathedral grounds.

Throughout the 1580s, Lyly's plays were performed by the combined or separate children's companies both at Court and in the private theaters at Blackfriars and Paul's. Early printed texts often include different prologues and epilogues for the different venues, but whether written for Court or private theaters, these extradramatic speeches sound the note of *sprezzatura*, the self-deprecating trope advocated by Castiglione for courtiers to use when entertaining their patrons. To judge from the courtly tone of these extradramatic addresses, the first Blackfriars theater and the playhouse at Paul's imitated the ambience at Court, and its relatively high cost of admission guaranteed an elite clientele.

Several of Lyly's plays, *Campaspe* (1583–4), *Sappho and Phao* (1584), and *Endymion* (1587–8), reflect a courtier's point of view, for they dramatize the power gap between remote and celibate sovereigns or deities and their mortal subjects or admirers. Another of Lyly's plays, *Gallathea* (1585–8), anticipates Shakespeare's interest in cross-dressed heroines by having two women disguised as boys fall in love with each other. Most of Lyly's plays follow the model of *Damon and Pythias* (1564–5) by Richard Edwardes, master of the Chapel Children from 1561 to 1566, by contrasting their main action with short, low-comic scenes for pages, apprentices, and maid-servants, roles which were evidently played by the youngest and smallest boys in the troupe, probably about nine or ten in age (Shapiro 1977, 105–6; Lin 1991).

Whether as a combined company or as separate troupes, the Lyly–Oxford enterprise went downhill after its loss of the Blackfriars lease. One reason for its decline may have been the establishment in 1583 of an adult troupe, the Queen's Men, more directly under royal patronage than either of the two leading children's troupes. The Queen's Men gave three performances at Court in 1583–4, when the Chapel Children and the Oxford's Boys gave one each, and the following year the adult troupe gave four. The Chapel Children did not perform at Court under its own name after February 2, 1584, and a troupe referred to in Court records as "Oxford's boys," perhaps an amalgamation of Paul's and Chapel choristers, appeared at Court for the last time during the following Christmas season, 1584–5. The Children of Paul's fared better, appearing at Court regularly each Christmas season from 1586–7 to 1589–90, but in 1591 the publisher of the quarto of Lyly's *Endymion* declared that "the Plaies in Paules were dissolved" (Dutton 2002, 334).

Most scholars believe that the troupe was silent because some of its plays were part of the Martin Marprelate controversy, a spirited if scurrilous exchange over questions of hierarchy within the Anglican Church. Like Lyly himself, the Children of Paul's are thought to have taken a conservative position in support of the bishops, and may have done so with too much satiric zeal. Both children's companies were dormant in the 1590s, although records of occasional provincial appearances suggest efforts by imposters to exploit the Paul's boys' reputation as purveyors of theatrical entertainment to the Court and nobility. It is possible that some choristers from Paul's as well as the Chapel Children found their way to adult troupes in the early 1590s, as is suggested by a play like *The Two Angry Women of Abington* (1590–1), which comments on the plight of the boy actors while employing many of the conventions of their companies' plays (Crow 2014).

Chorister Troupes (2)

When the Children of the Chapel and the Children of Paul's resumed playing around 1600, they did so as more commercialized enterprises than they had been a decade earlier. The owner-managers of both revived troupes involved entrepreneurs who surely expected a return on money invested

in the companies. The boy companies continued to entertain Elizabeth, and could continue to maintain the legal fiction that their performances were simply rehearsals for Court performances. Both troupes still claimed at least a nominal link to a prestigious religious choir, and their choir-masters, active in their resuscitation, retained the right to impress new personnel. Their locations within the precincts of St. Paul's Cathedral and Blackfriars made them immune from municipal control and close to fashionable neighborhoods nearer the center of London. Functioning more or less as small commercial playhouses, they charged much more for admission than did the public theaters and thus catered to a more exclusive clientele: members of the aristocracy and gentry and their entourages, whether London-based or there temporarily for sessions of the law courts or for pleasure, as well as members of the legal profession, students at Inns of Court, and foreign tourists. The same cohort of elite spectators also attended plays in the public theaters, but in those large amphitheaters they were greatly outnumbered by playgoers of lower rank. At Paul's and Blackfriars, the audience was, and wanted to think of itself as, patronizing an elite venue, one uncontaminated by groundlings who stood in the yards of "public" theaters. At Paul's, in the words of a character in John Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, a play performed at the newly reopened playhouse at Paul's, "a man shall not be choked / With the stench of garlic, nor be pasted / To the barmy jacket of a beer-brewer" ([1600] 1939, 234)

The resumption of playing at Paul's in 1599 roughly coincides with Edward Pearce replacing Thomas Giles as choirmaster. The resuscitated troupe most likely performed in the same hall used by Westcott. Court appearances followed within a year of revival, during the winter revels of 1600–1, and the company played at Court several more times until its demise, probably in 1607 or 1608. Its last Court performance, July 30, 1606, was of a lost play entitled *The Abuses*, on the occasion of a visit by James's brother-in-law, King Christian of Denmark.

Pearce's precise role in the theatrical activities at Paul's is problematic, but his choristers were probably the same boys who performed plays, or formed the nucleus of the company known as the Children of Paul's, which may have included former choristers. Although the choir at St. Paul's Cathedral usually numbered ten or twelve, the acting company evidently needed from fourteen to twenty actors for plays produced immediately after their revival (Knutson 2001, 82–93).

A strong connection with the choir is suggested by the extensive use of song and instrumental music in the company's repertory. One of the members of the troupe was a chorister named Thomas Ravenscroft, who went on to become a well-known composer and among whose published compositions are songs from plays performed by the company.

Pearce claimed, perhaps disingenuously, that he was only marginally involved in theatrical activities at Paul's. Testifying in a libel suit arising from a lost play by George Chapman, *The Old Joiner of Aldgate*, performed at Paul's in 1603, Pearce minimized his role in the company's management, perhaps to avoid responsibility for any of the damages awarded the plaintiff. He explained that the burden of the company's management had fallen on the shoulders of Thomas Woodford, a businessman who had entered the picture in 1603 or 1604 and who subsequently fell out with Pearce (Sisson 1936, 22–3; Munro 2005, 184). Edward Kirkham, a Yeoman of the Revels, was also involved in the business affairs of the company, as he later was at Blackfriars, and perhaps was involved as a kind of "corporate raider" in the closing of the Children of Paul's (Corrigan 2001). Indeed, an investigation of Kirkham's wide-ranging theatrical activities over several decades might clarify the relationship between the Revels Office and the boy companies. Whatever Kirkham's role, Pearce's centrality to the operation, despite his testimony in the libel case, is attested to first by his ability to revive the company in 1599, and second by the annual

payment of twenty pounds he was offered in “dead rent” in 1608–10 by rival children’s troupes to keep the Paul’s playhouse dark (Wickham, Berry, and Ingram 2000, 318).

About two dozen plays survive from the second phase of theatrical activity at Paul’s, 1599 to 1607–8. When the troupe resumed playing, the first plays were revivals of anonymous older plays, such as the morality *The Contention Between Liberality and Prodigality* (1567–8), and the Lylyesque pastoral romance *The Maid’s Metamorphosis* (1597–1600), but the company soon found a new voice in the work of John Marston, a young resident of the Middle Temple, who wrote Juvenalian verse satires and an Ovidian epyllion, or mini-epic, which proffers erotic material even as it chastises the reader for wanting to read it. Whether Marston was a major part of the directorate of the resuscitated troupe, as Gair (1982) has argued, remains unclear, but his earliest plays demonstrate a familiarity with the Paul’s boys and the architecture of its playhouse.

Marston’s *Jack Drum’s Entertainment* pokes fun at the archaic quality of other plays performed at the same theater, referring to them as “the mustie fopperies of antiquitie,” unworthy of “the audience that frequenteth there” ([1600] 1939, 234). In another of his early plays for the revived Paul’s boys, *Antonio and Mellida* (1599–1600), Marston initiated a mode of drama rich in linguistic inventiveness and marked by such metatheatrical features as having the actors discuss their roles in the Induction and comment on the instability of their squeaking voices (Bloom 2007, 50–9). Marston’s early plays for the revived Children of Paul’s used the boy actors to burlesque the pretentious posturing of the adult world, and to parody the portrayals of adult characters in plays acted by adult companies. In *Antonio’s Revenge* (1599–1600), Marston applied burlesque and parody to the concept of revenge and its dramatic representation in such popular adult plays as Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1587) and the so-called *Ur-Hamlet* (c.1589).³

Marston’s last play for the Paul’s boys was probably *The Fawn* (1604–5), another Italianate anti-court satire, which was also performed by the children’s troupe at Blackfriars. This play, like Thomas Middleton’s *The Phoenix* (1603–4), featured a disguised nobleman who denounces the vice and folly of his world. Middleton, who succeeded Marston as the principal dramatist for the Children of Paul’s, continued to offer spectators targets of ridicule in a new type of satiric comedy which modern critics have called “city comedy.” In a series of such plays, *Michaelmas Term* (1604–5), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1604–6), *A Mad World, My Masters* (1604–6), and perhaps *The Puritan* (1606), Middleton pitted impoverished but attractive young prodigal gallants against a host of predatory authority figures – merchants, lawyers, usurers, uncles, and grandfathers. These plays invite audiences to share in the oedipal triumphs of the young over the old, triumphs usually including the restoration of wealth and status, and union with attractive young women.

The importance of city comedies in the repertoires of both major boy companies can be witnessed by the “Ho” plays. When Thomas Dekker and John Webster wrote *Westward Ho* (c.1604) for the Paul’s boys, it elicited a response from the Blackfriars troupe in the form of *Eastward Ho* (1605) by Jonson, Marston, and Chapman, to which Paul’s, again relying on Dekker and Webster, responded with *Northward Ho* (1605). All three plays dramatize the familiar rivalry between merchants and gallants over women and money, while *Eastward Ho* includes a satiric and parodic treatment of the prodigal son, a motif treated moralistically in city comedies performed by contemporaneous adult troupes.

What is often seen as the most anomalous play in the repertory of the Children of Paul’s, Chapman’s *Bussy D’Ambois* (c.1604), a tragedy based on recent French history, can be regarded as a tragic inversion of the prodigal son motif with a heavy dose of anti-court satire. The title character, a kind of natural hero, is taken up as a novelty by the King and his decadent courtiers

for his candor, simplicity, valor, and military prowess, but they later destroy him when he has a passionate affair with the young wife of an older courtier. The sequel, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (1611), was performed by the Blackfriars troupe. Both plays seem like odd choices for boy companies, and in fact the first of these works was later acquired and performed by the King's Men, in whose repertory it flourished for many years (Munro 2005, 156–62).

The second phase of the boy company at Blackfriars parallels that of the troupe at Paul's, but with some significant differences. In the latter part of 1600, perhaps a year or less after the resumption of playing at Paul's, the Children of the Chapel Royal also began performing once again in the second Blackfriars theater, located in a different part of the former priory from that used between 1576 and 1584 by Farrant's troupes under various names. The second Blackfriars theater was twice the size of Farrant's playhouse, measuring forty-six feet by sixty-six feet and probably accommodated 600–700 spectators (Wickham, Berry, and Ingram 2000, 501; Munro 2005, 16). Like Paul's, because of its size and its limited season and weekly performances, it evidently needed to charge more for admission than the larger open-roofed "public" theaters used by adult companies, and was therefore frequented by more affluent playgoers. Like Paul's, it was a commercial enterprise, not an institution maintained by royal subsidization, as was once claimed on the basis of erroneous testimony by a German visitor (Wallace 1908), but it still preserved vestiges of the older, patronage-based courtly model associated with the name of the Children of the Chapel Royal. Also like the Children of Paul's, the Chapel Children, under various names, performed at Court during the winter revels of 1600–1 and nearly every year thereafter until 1608–9.

The moving force behind the revival of the Chapel Children appears to be Henry Evans, formerly associated with Westcott at Paul's and with Oxford and Lyly and the children's troupe that performed at the first Blackfriars theater. Evans' partners in this enterprise included Edward Kirkham of the Revels Office, and Nathaniel Giles, choirmaster of the Chapel Royal following the death of William Hunnis in 1597. Like all previous choirmasters, Giles held the right to conscript boys into his service. As Pearce did at Paul's, Giles evidently used his impressment privileges to augment the twelve boy choristers officially maintained by the Chapel Royal.

In one ill-fated instance in 1601, the power of impressment was used to conscript a boy named Thomas Clifton, whose father used his considerable political influence to have his son released. From the extant records of the case, we know the names of other boys impressed into the company. One was Salomon Pavy, who joined the company at the age of nine or ten, specializing in playing old men. Pavy died at the age of twelve or thirteen and became the subject of a touching epitaph by Ben Jonson. Another boy impressed into the Blackfriars troupe was Nathan Field, who went on to become one of the leading actors of the period as well as a minor dramatist. As an aftermath of the Clifton affair, Evans was compelled to withdraw from the active management of the company (Lamb 2009, 118–43, 45–7, 57–8).

One of the earliest plays performed by the resuscitated Chapel Children at the second Blackfriars theater was Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1600). Like Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, a Paul's play, this play flatters its spectators in its Induction by contrasting them with "public" theater audiences but goes on to mock the company's own repertory as "the *umbræ*, or ghosts of some three or foure playes, departed a dozen yeers since [which] have bin seene walking on your stage heere" (Jonson 1982, 2: 6). Such mockery was especially audacious in a play which was itself partly modeled on Lyly's plays of the 1580s, performed both at Court and in the "private" indoor theaters and designed to praise Elizabeth. Jonson's praise of the Queen under the name of "Cynthia," however, was also accompanied by mockery of a whole gallery of pretenders to courtly status, much in the satiric spirit of Marston's early plays for Paul's boys.

Other early plays at the second Blackfriars theater include Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601), as well as a series of "humors" comedies by George Chapman, such as *Mayday* (c.1601), *Sir Giles Goosecap* (c.1602) and *The Gentleman Usher* (c.1602). A few years after the reopening of both private indoor theaters, Marston shifted his allegiance from the Children of Paul's to the Chapel Children, who performed *The Malcontent* (1603) as well as Marston's *The Fawn* (c.1604), *The Dutch Courtesan* (c.1604), and *Sophonisba* (1605–6), the tragic drama of a Roman wife, a throwback to the pathetic heroine plays favored by children's troupes of the 1570s and 1580s, but now embellished with subtle and elaborate musical effects well suited to the acoustics in a private theater like the second Blackfriars (Dustagheer 2014, 138–43).

Around 1604, two new investors joined the Blackfriars syndicate, William Rastell, merchant, and Thomas Kendall, haberdasher. Later, Robert Keysar, goldsmith, entered the picture, as did John Marston (Munro 2005, 26–8, 182–3). Like Evans, most of these men probably invested in the boy company at Blackfriars in hope of a profitable return, and most of the subsequent litigation concerns the recovery of their investments from one another or from the troupe's assets. In 1604, the children's company at Blackfriars also severed its connection with the Chapel Royal and became the Children of the Queen's Revels. Queen Anne evidently wished to set up a household establishment parallel to James I's, which would include her own acting company, her own Lord Chamberlain, and several other officers under his jurisdiction. Samuel Daniel was appointed as something like Anne's master of the revels, with responsibilities to supply her with theatrical entertainment provided that the texts first obtained his approval (Munro 2005, 18–19, 33–4).

Daniel was an unfortunate choice, for he soon found himself in trouble over his own Blackfriars play, *Philotas* (1605), which seemed to allude to the Essex rebellion against Elizabeth, still a dangerous topic. The company subsequently mocked the King, first in alleged anti-Scots allusions in *Eastward Ho*, secondly in highly personal satire of James and his favorites in John Day's *The Isle of Gulls* (1606), and finally in a lost play which ridiculed James's drunkenness, silver mines, and love of hunting. In 1606, James was angry enough over these attacks to forbid Nathaniel Giles to allow any of the Chapel Children to perform at Blackfriars, and the acting troupe, no longer having a claim to royal patronage, renamed itself the Children of the Revels or the Children of Blackfriars. Two years later, the company ran into trouble by staging unfavorable representations of the French Court in Chapman's *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* (1608; Munro 2009, 29–30).

Personal satire, also called "application" and "railing," was quite prevalent in plays performed at the second Blackfriars. Its audiences apparently welcomed satire sharp enough to evoke the displeasure of high-ranking individuals who were or imagined themselves to be targets of ridicule. A number of plays are preceded by prologues which deny any intention to satirize real people, a sure sign that such "application" was inferred even if unintended. In his *Apology for Actors* (c.1607), Thomas Heywood chastised the children's troupes for satirizing recognizable individuals from behind the protection of their "juniority" (Shapiro 1977, 5), although such protection did not spare members of the Children of the Queen's Revels from imprisonment for satirizing James and his courtiers in *The Isle of Gulls* (Lamb 2009, 70).

The freewheeling "railing" in many of the plays performed by the Children of the Queen's Revels may well be a function not of a cohesive audience but of an aggregation of various kinds of spectators – ranging from aristocrats to rising bourgeoisie – all unsure, in a time of social mobility, of their precise social standing. Hoping to buttress their social identities by attending an expensive theater which marketed itself as vaguely connected to traditions of Court

performance, Blackfriars playgoers often found themselves watching plays that questioned rather than celebrated their social aspirations (Munro 2005, 61–6). The satiric impulse ran strong even when the company developed its own mode of tragicomedy, in revenge plays like Marston's *The Malcontent*, comedies like Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1604–5), and in plays derived from the pastoral tradition like Day's *The Isle of Gulls* and Beaumont's *Cupid's Revenge* (1607–8). The company even developed its own brand of tragicomedy strongly flavored with satire, which its audiences preferred to an Italianate pastoral tragicomedy devoid of satire, such as Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (c.1608; Munro 2005, 96–7, 132–3).⁴

In 1608, Evans returned his twenty-one-year lease on the second Blackfriars theater to the Burbages, who made the playhouse available to the King's Men. Keysar moved the Children of the Queen's Revels from Blackfriars to a theater in Whitefriars, which in 1607–8 had been the home of another company of boy actors, the shadowy Children of the King's Revels, a thoroughly commercial enterprise having no connection with any sponsoring academic or religious institution and therefore never having had the power to conscript personnel. This short-lived company differed from the major Jacobean boy companies in other ways as well. Among its shareholders were several playwrights, who may have tended to see the troupe as a vehicle for self-promotion. Like other boy companies, it frequently staged city comedies, but its plays, such as Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* (1607–8), exhibit a strong and somewhat unique strain of homoerotic bawdry (Bly 2000, 1–86).

In 1610, a patent was granted to Keysar's new syndicate, which now included Philip Rosseter, a royal lutenist, and several marginal theatrical figures, for a company to be called the Children of the Queen's Revels. By this time, the actors who had once been a part of the Blackfriars children's troupe merged with a group of adult actors in a new troupe, the Lady Elizabeth's Men. Rosseter and his associates held on to their patent for the Children of the Queen's Revels, and a troupe playing under that name performed four or five plays at Court during the winter of 1612–13, and may have toured the provinces. In 1617–18, three different troupes claiming this very title arrived in Leicester, suggesting that in the provinces, if not at Court or in London, juvenile troupes claiming to be former purveyors of entertainment to the Court still retained traces of commercial viability.

Various reasons for the demise of the boy companies have been suggested, such as the loss of the Blackfriars theater and growing royal displeasure over anti-court satire. A more persuasive explanation has recently centered on structural changes in the recruitment and maintenance of the actors in the boy companies once they lost the power to conscript new personnel (Lamb 2009, 35, 55–61). Actors who had been children in 1599 grew older and became youths early in James's reign. Nathan Field was seventeen in 1604, when, as a member of the Children of Paul's, he played Bussy D'Ambois, and then went on to perform the role for several years as one of the Children of the Queen's Revels (Munro 2009, 49). In the years immediately after the troupe was reactivated, its choirmaster Nathaniel Giles could use his power of impressment to replace superannuated boys with younger children. However, in 1602 Giles dropped out of the active directorate of the boy company at Blackfriars; in 1606 he was explicitly forbidden to use his power of impressment to recruit boys to be actors.

To recruit and maintain boys, the directors of the Children of the Queen's Revels resorted to a version of apprenticeship similar to that used by adult troupes, which was a modified version of the terms used by guilds. But whereas boys in adult companies were apprenticed to an individual actor, boys in a children's troupe were apprenticed to one of the directors of the company. Thus, in 1606, Abel Cooke's mother agreed to apprentice her son to Thomas Kendall, a shareholder of the Children of the Queen's Revels. The following year, Cooke's mother and Kendall reaffirmed the original agreement: Cooke would be indentured for three years, during which time "he

would be practiced and exercised in the ... art of playing” (Lamb 2009, 55–6). Under the old system whereby the maintenance of conscripted boys could be charged to Chapel Royal, the new apprenticeship system increased the company’s overhead expenses.

Moreover, apprentices in the adult companies might look forward to becoming masters themselves, sharers in a company like the King’s Men, as did former apprentices like Richard Robinson, Richard Sharpe, and Roger Pallant (Shapiro 1994, 34). Actors in the boy companies who were no longer boys could not become masters or sharers in a company that was controlled by a syndicate of investors. Some boy actors left the Children of the Queen’s Revels to become members of adult troupes, as did William Ostler, who joined the King’s Men. Nathan Field, who was still a member of the Children of the Queen’s Revels at the age of twenty-six, eventually joined the Lady Elizabeth’s Men in 1613 as a full-fledged actor, as did other members of the same troupe (Lamb 2009, 65–6). In short, unable to recruit younger boys or to provide appropriate advancement for actors who were now young men, the company’s business model was no longer sustainable and the troupe dissolved by 1613.

Caroline Revivals

In the reign of Charles I, two children’s troupes appeared regularly at two of the six theaters that made London a center of urban sophistication in the 1630s (Butler 2009, 104–19). Both of them had connections to the Court. In 1630, a company of fourteen youths, known variously as the Children of the Revels and Company of His Majesty’s Revels, began performing at Salisbury Court under the leadership of two royal servants, Richard Gunell and Richard Heton, and William Blagrove, deputy to Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, who held a small share in the theater. The company, like others performing in the indoor theaters of the decade, specialized in comedies, such as those by James Shirley and Richard Brome, which mirrored the glamorous lives of their elite spectators. The company experienced financial difficulties and internal dissension and, after a brief sojourn at the Fortune, one of the remaining open-roofed amphitheaters, returned to Salisbury Court reconstituted essentially as an adult company, where it failed to survive the extended plague closing of 1636–7.

At the same time, Christopher Beeston, a royal servant and former actor who ran the Cockpit (or Phoenix) in Drury Lane, the home of an adult troupe called the Queen’s Men, organized the King and Queen’s Young Company, which he claimed would be training actors specifically for Court performance, while the Queen’s Men took up residence at Salisbury Court. Under the tight control of Beeston and his son, the King and Queen’s Young Company flourished. It was a completely commercial operation without even a tenuous connection to the Chapel Royal, or to any religious or educational institution. The Beestons gained control both of the repertory of plays formerly the property of the Queen’s Men and of the future services of its former house playwright, Richard Brome, but like all theaters and companies, were put out of business for good by the closing of the theaters in 1642.

Contemporary Revivals

In England, “the school play” continued for several centuries as a pedagogical or extracurricular exercise, no longer linked, as it was in the early modern period, to Court entertainment or to the commercial theater. In recent years, a company of schoolboys from Stratford-upon-Avon’s King

Edward VI grammar school began performing as Edward's Boys under the direction of Perry Mills, their deputy headmaster. As of 2016, the troupe had performed plays acted by early modern children's troupes by such dramatists as Lyly, Marlow, Marston, and Middleton (Edward's Boys 2016).

While Edward's Boys is an all-male troupe tied to an educational institution, the London Globe has even more recently created the Young Company, a professional troupe of actors and actresses aged twelve to sixteen who will perform plays from the repertoires of early modern boy companies in the Globe's new indoor theater, the Wanamaker Playhouse. In its opening season, 2013–14, the troupe performed Marston's *The Malcontent*.

This production has raised the same questions which have intrigued scholars interested in the early modern boy companies: How did spectators at the Wanamaker Playhouse respond to seeing Marston's sordid adult intrigues enacted by adolescent performers? Are modern spectators totally engaged by the dramatic illusion, or does the known age of the actors, whatever their acting style, create a piquant sense of artificiality, aesthetic distance, or dual consciousness? (Lamb 2009, 21, 148 n. 8).

For the early modern period, recent arguments in favor of engagement have pointed to evidence of the eroticization of boys in and outside the theater as likely to have narrowed the gap between actor and role, especially in the years when many "boy" actors, like Field, were actually youths or young men. However, those under twenty-five might still be considered children in terms of their legal status, despite their biological status as postpubescent youths and even later as sexually mature young adults (Greteman 2012, 135–40; Bly 2009, 141–3). It has also been argued that audiences accepted the discrepancy between child actor and adult character, as they did female impersonation, as a stage convention and that stage properties, costumes, wigs, and beards, as well as verbal descriptions of characters' traits, heightened the dramatic illusion and thus further reduced, if not entirely eliminated, any ironic distancing effect (Fisher 2002). Proponents of dual consciousness of actor and character essentially rely on Samuel Johnson's admonition that "the spectators are always in their sense, and know ... that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players" (Johnson [1765] 1968, 7: 77).

The Young Company may not be able to settle this debate, as reviewers of *The Malcontent* seem to differ. One critic noticed "ironic distance" and "striking gaps between content and deliverer" (Williams 2014), while another praised the actor playing Pietro as "persuasive" and the actress playing his faithless wife as "impressively poisonous" (Shilling 2014). More performances and more reviews of future productions may reveal that dual consciousness may be in the eye of the beholder, as well as manifest itself from moment to moment. Whether or not such productions can resolve the debate, one welcomes the opportunity to see the plays enacted by the early boy companies brought to life by juvenile performers in a venue that resembles their indoor playhouses of early modern London.⁵

NOTES

- 1 For lists of plays performed by boy companies in various venues, see Bevington (1962, 26–47, 65); Shapiro (1977, 261–8); and Munro (2005, 167–78).
- 2 Consult Peter H. Greenfield, Chapter 22 in this volume, for more on touring.
- 3 For more on revenge tragedy, see Marissa Greenberg, Chapter 29 in this volume.
- 4 For further discussion of tragicomedy, see Jane Degenhardt and Cyrus Mulready, Chapter 30 in this volume.
- 5 I am grateful to Virginia Strain for bibliographic assistance.

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Women's Involvement in Theatrical Production

Natasha Korda

It has been nearly a century since Thornton Shirley Graves announced – warning that it might come as “something of a shock” – that there is “considerable evidence to suggest that the employment of females in dramatic entertainments of one form or another was nothing particularly novel in Elizabethan England” (1925, 185–6). Graves was not the first to investigate the subject of women’s involvement in theatrical production in Shakespeare’s day; indeed, he describes it as an “old question” that had been broached “from time to time” in the pages of *Notes and Queries* during the preceding century (184). Those who had done so, however, had framed the query as an effort to identify “the first attempt to introduce female actors on our [i.e. London’s] public stage” (Rimbault 1857, 471; see also Birch 1885; A. H. 1885; Clarke 1886). Graves’s singular contribution was to broaden the scope of inquiry to consider “feminine participation” (1925, 186) in a far broader range of performance activities across England and on the European continent. In so doing, he set an important precedent for recent feminist scholarship on female performance, which often credits Graves with initiating its critique of the “all-male stage” as a governing paradigm of Elizabethan theater history (e.g. Thompson 1996, 104).

Yet such a critique was the very opposite of Graves’s stated intent, which was to determine that there were no actresses on English stages prior to the Restoration. Although Graves went on to advance “considerable evidence” of women’s involvement in what he describes as “other entertainments closely related to the drama” (1925, 186), such as Court masques, civic pageants and popular festivities (e.g. Hock Tuesday plays, May games, mummings, morris dances, jigs, acrobatic feats, rope-dancing, and puppet shows), he did so in an effort to reinforce, rather than to resist, the paradigm of the “all-male” professional stage as the proper object of theater history. Engaged in a project of establishing theater history as an academic discipline, Graves and his peers were inclined to view female performance of whatever sort and however “frequent” (186) as exceptional and irregular, that is, as extraneous to the disciplinary boundaries and rules they sought to establish. For this reason, Graves classifies the heterogeneous female performance

activities mentioned above as nondramatic, however "closely related" they might be to "the drama" as the discipline had defined it.

Two years prior to the publication of Graves's essay, E. K. Chambers had similarly situated female performance beyond the parameters defined by his monumental, field-shaping work, *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), in a single sentence: "Boys were regularly employed to take female parts, and although it would be going rather too far to say that a woman never appeared upon an Elizabethan stage, women were not included in the ordinary companies" (1: 371). In a footnote, Chambers elaborates: "Women only began to appear regularly at the Restoration," while admitting, "There had been occasional earlier examples," but curtly concludes, "The exceptions are, I think, such as prove the rule" (1: 371 n. 4). Chambers' relegation of female performers to a footnote replicates on the page his delimitation of "the Elizabethan stage" by marginalizing performance practices that took place outside its parameters, on other stages. These parameters determined what was incorporated into the discipline as Chambers' text defined it, its borders being confined to the metropolitan center and the dramatic forms that developed within its civic structures and ordinances, that is, by regular employment in London's professional playing companies. Female performers elsewhere, on other stages or in other kinds of dramatic entertainment, were thereby excluded or marginalized.

By adopting the criteria used by Chambers to define "the" Elizabethan stage, Graves consigned the considerable evidence of female performance presented in his essay, which went well beyond that mentioned by Chambers, to the status of additional exceptions that prove the rule. A summary of Graves's essay by Hardin Craig published the following year reiterated the exceptional and irregular status of the evidence Graves had presented: "A sound and interesting article which shows that women were never regularly employed to act on the English stage prior to the Restoration, but that their sporadic appearances on special occasions were probably more frequent than we have been led to believe" (1926, 220). Far from "shock[ing]" his readers, Graves helped to solidify the "all-male stage" as the foundation of theater history by defining female performance as its "other."

The purpose in clarifying the context of early theater historians' presentation of evidence concerning female performance is not to diminish their contributions, but rather to investigate the governing assumptions and methodological grounds upon which theater history is based, in an effort to trace its past agendas and to chart those of its present and potential future. Graves and his peers were engaged simultaneously in a project of discipline formation and of professionalization: by defining the rules of their discipline, early professors of theater history distinguished their methods, and the knowledge these methods produced, from the purportedly irregular, undisciplined investigations of amateur antiquarians (W. Ingram 1992, 1–9). Against this backdrop, we may better understand Graves's aim to establish "once and for all that there is hardly a practice of our old theater more demonstrably certain than the fact that professional actresses were never regularly employed in England prior to the Restoration" (1925, 185–6). This assertion of definitive knowledge grounded in "demonstrably certain" fact seeks to quell "once and for all" – even as it acknowledges the pesky existence of – speculations that "women actors cannot in the Elizabethan time have appeared so unexampled as we think" (Clarke 1886, 218; see also Rimbault 1857; Birch 1885). Such speculation was grounded, Graves argues, not in hard evidence, but rather in a "difficult to suppress ... *feeling* that actresses adorned the stage in Shakspeare's lifetime" (1925, 185; emphasis added). The empirical methods he and his peers developed sought to counter the fuzzy contours of mere feeling with hard facts. Although Graves concedes that the exceptional, "sporadic appearance of women on special occasions may have

been more frequent than has been generally recognized," he casts the evidence he presents of such activity as "too indefinite to be of much value" (196). Neither Graves nor Chambers acknowledges the degree to which the definitional categories they sought to establish might have contributed to this indefiniteness and insignificance.

The standard of professionalism that would thereafter guide Elizabethan theater history came to define not only the discipline itself but its prescribed object of study as well. Chambers thus delimited the focus of *The Elizabethan Stage* as the period during which "the actor's occupation began to take its place as a regular profession to which a man might look for the career of a lifetime," as distinct from the irregular "by-work" in which amateurs and women engaged (1923, 1: 309). Although the "regular profession" to which Chambers refers is that of the Elizabethan stage actor, the rules he establishes would likewise come to delimit that of the Elizabethan stage historian. Graves draws this connection even more explicitly at the end of his essay: "it is clear, as every serious student has recognized, that actresses were never regularly employed in English theaters prior to the Restoration" (1925, 196). Those who concerned themselves with the "indefinite" parameters of female performance, defined as irregular employment outside the purview of the professional stage, were thus characterized as not "serious" (i.e. professional) scholars.

Like all histories, this brief account of the professionalization of theater history is only partial, for women were no more absent from scholarly activity within and outside the walls of academe in Graves's and Chambers' day than they were from theatrical activity within and outside the walls of the theater in Shakespeare's day. Yet the contributions of amateur or uncredentialed female scholars were not always credited, or were relegated to the margins of the written record. Hulda Wallace (née Berggren), for example, wife of theater historian Charles William Wallace, worked alongside her husband in the Public Records Office from 1907 to 1916 sifting through millions of documents in search of evidence pertaining to Shakespearean biography and stage history. Although Charles expressed gratitude to Hulda on public occasions and in his personal papers (Schoenbaum 1970, 465), she is not credited on the title-pages of his publications.¹

When the first female theater historians entered the profession by earning PhDs and publishing independent research, several cautiously ventured to stray beyond the strict confines of the professional London stage to consider how women may have contributed to its development. Winifred Smith (PhD, Columbia University, 1912) described her research on the mixed-gender commedia dell'arte troupes who travelled to England as "conservatively judicious in estimating the[ir] influence" on the Elizabethan stage, concluding that Italian actresses "would have met with little favor" in England (1912, 200, 176; see also W. Smith 1908, 557).² Mary Sullivan (PhD, University of Nebraska, 1912) in her *Court Masques of James I: Their Influence on Shakespeare and the Public Theatres* (notably dedicated to both "Professor and Mrs. C. W. Wallace") tentatively broached the question of how aristocratic and royal female masquers might have influenced male actors on the professional stage, proposing, "It may be worthwhile to suggest the query as to what was the influence upon the public stage of having such women as the beautiful and graceful Queen Anne, her daughter Elizabeth and the noblewomen of the Court taking the parts of women in the private theatricals in the Court" (1913, 184). She was roundly reprimanded for doing so by an anonymous reviewer in *The Nation* (1913), who dismissed her suggestion as "absolutely gratuitous and the kind of misleading surmise that unsteadies the half-informed." Given the disciplinary parameters that defined the field, it is not surprising that it took some time for the seeds planted by Smith and Sullivan to flourish.

In the 1980s and 1990s the very definition of what constitutes a “stage” or a “theater” came under scrutiny with the rise of Performance Studies and Feminist Studies, when a new wave of scholarship opened the discipline of theater history to new modes of inquiry and interdisciplinary methods. Bolstered by the massive archival excavations of the University of Toronto’s Records of Early English Drama (REED) project, scholars began to unearth a “hidden tradition of female performance” (Thompson 1996, 103; see also Stokes 1993; Orgel 1996). Theatrical activity beyond the confines of London’s professional theater was found to be more wide-ranging than previously supposed. Departing from the discipline-building, boundary-defining agenda of early theater historians, recent scholars have sought to trace female performance practices across borders of period and place, dissolving entrenched paradigms in the process. The centripetal force of earlier scholarship’s ever narrowing focus on the London stage of Elizabeth’s day, and above all on Shakespeare, has given way to centrifugal expansion in studies guided by performance practices that cross geographic and temporal boundaries. English insularity and Shakespearean exceptionalism have begun to give way to transnational and comparative studies (Brown and Parolin 2005; Walthaus and Corporaal 2008; Parolin 2012b) and to collaborative scholarship, such as that of the Theater without Borders research collective (Henke and Nicholson 2008; 2014). The historiographical chasm separating pre- from post-Restoration drama has been bridged in studies that emphasize continuities of female performance across period divisions (Findlay, Hodgson-Wright, with Williams 2000; Brown and Parolin 2005; Tomlinson 2005; D. Williams 2014).

By foregrounding female performance, this revisionist theater history “obliges us to rethink our definitions of theatre” – previously defined by plays, players, and playhouses – insofar as women performed in a wide array of alternative playing spaces, including streets, inns, alehouses, town squares, civic halls, markets, country houses and gardens, royal courts, as well as in and around traditional playhouses (Findlay, Hodgson-Wright, with Williams 2000, 6; G. Williams, Findlay, and Hodgson-Wright 2005; Findlay 2006; 2008). Rather than restricting its focus to London’s purpose-built playhouses, recent scholarship examines the ways in which female performances outside their purview transformed “everyday space into theatrical space” (Mueller 2011b, 110). The diverse forms of embodied display in which women participated has prompted scholars to rethink what defines a “player” or “play,” as well as to redraw the contours of the dramatic canon, since female performances were often unscripted, unpublished, amateur, or improvised. These categories are themselves in need of scrutiny, as they are too often conflated and opposed to the skilled, scripted performances of the all-male professional companies. As we shall see, unscripted performances by women were not always entirely improvised, nor were improvised performances always entirely unscripted; scripted plays written and/or performed by women were not always published; and unscripted performances were not always amateur, unskilled, or unpaid.

REED and other archives have greatly expanded our understanding of the heterogeneous performance activities in which women at every level of society participated across England (see MacLean and Somerset 2011). Ordinary women performed regularly as amateurs in local country house and civic entertainments, parish festivities, and guild drama (Stokes 1993; 2005; 2012; Williams, Findlay, and Hodgson-Wright 2005), and seasonally in rural May games and morris dances (Parolin 2012a). Other female performers challenge our definition of what constitutes a “professional” and the notion that professional performance was restricted to the male troupes in London or liveried male traveling troupes, since there is evidence that itinerant women performing “alone, with their husbands, and with troupes” were licensed by the Master of Revels

to earn a living through performance skills such as “Daunceing on the Roapes,” “tumbling vaulteing sleight of hand and other such like feates of Activety” accompanied by “musicke Drume or Trumpetts,” animal demonstrations (of dancing horses and the like), and puppet shows enacting “dyvers storyes” that may have been scripted (Mueller 2008a, 56, 59–61; Bawcutt 1996, 308–9). Such women were referred to as “players,” as in a REED record from the Coventry Chamberlains’ and Wardens’ Account Book of 1638, stating under “Rewardes to playeres,” that 4s. 3d. had been paid to “Robert Tayler and Ann Mossock, players who came by warrant to shew the worldes Creation” (R. Ingram 1981, 442). If the distinction between the professional and the amateur is simply the fact of being paid (and/or licensed) to engage in a particular form of work (or play) for a living, we might also include in this category working women who were licensed by civic magistrates to sell wares in the streets, who drew on a variety of performance skills, such as singer-sellers of broadsheet ballads (Mueller 2008a, 62; B. Smith 2005), mountebanks (Katritzky 2007; Mirabella 2005; 2009), peddlers and street criers (Korda 2011, 144–73).

Networks of itinerant women performers extended not only across England but beyond its borders as well. Recent scholars have challenged the notion that female performers from the European continent, and in particular professional actresses from France and Italy, were little known or “met with little favor” in England, being “frowned upon by the court and left to the tender mercies of the British philistine” (W. Smith 1912, 176; Lawrence 1912, 129). By contrast, they argue that foreign actresses “were crucial to the transmission of continental dramatic developments to England” (Poulsen 2005, 172). There is truth in both claims: response to professional actresses from the Continent can perhaps best be described as deeply ambivalent. They were excoriated by Puritans like William Prynne, who lambastes “some Frenchwomen, or monsters rather,” who “in Michaelmas term 1629, attempted to act a French play at the playhouse in Blackfriars,” as “an impudent, shameful, unwomanish, graceless, yf not more than whorish attempt” (1633, 414). Even some men of letters frowned upon them: Thomas Nashe dubbed Italian actresses “common Curtizens” who “forbeare no immodest speech or unchast action” (1595, 27). Yet other literate Englishmen who traveled abroad praised the skills of actresses: Thomas Coryate, who witnessed them in a “Comedie” in Venice, claimed “they performed it with as good a grace, action, gesture, and whatsoever convenient for a Player, as ever I saw any masculine Actor” (1611, 247). Even Prynne acknowledges that “there was great resort” to see the “Frenchwomen actors” at Blackfriars in 1629 (1633, 215). Indeed, we know that the same troupe was licensed by the Master of Revels to appear two weeks later at the Red Bull, and three weeks after that at the Fortune (Lawrence 1912, 130–1). What seems clear is that the rising fame of foreign actresses on the Continent and their appearances on the English stage, whether praised or reviled, were certainly not ignored (Parolin 2012b, 16).

In light of these varied types of activity, recent scholarship has argued that female performers were not “the great and singular exceptions to the rule of the all-male stage” (Brown and Parolin 2005, 3), but rather were “customary and unexceptional . . . the rule, not the exception, all across England” and the Continent (Parolin 2012a, 46). Indeed, it has sought to demonstrate that the “all-male” London stage was itself the exception, an “anomalous” cultural formation quite unlike the mixed-gender performance practices found outside London’s professional stage (McManus 2009, 167; see also Stokes 2005; 2012; 2015). Grasping the influence of such practices on English drama necessitates a more complex model of cultural transmission than that afforded by traditional, text-based, source studies, one that is able to account for both scripted and unscripted drama. Foreign actresses, and in particular divas of the *commedia dell’arte* such as Isabella Andreini and Vittoria Pisimi, were renowned for their virtuosic performance skills and ability

to display a “full range of emotion, from joy to madness,” as well as a “self-conscious literariness” in their flights of rhetorical wit and eloquence (Poulsen 2005, 175). Commedia actresses in traveling troupes variously drew on material from *novelle*, *commedia erudite*, pastoral plays, and scripted plots or *scenarii*, as well as improvised *lazzi* (comic routines) and “theatergrams,” that is, interchangeable, iterable, units of plot, character, speech, and action (see Clubb 1989; McGill 1991; Brown 1999; 2005; 2012; 2015; Henke 2002; MacNeil 2003; Katritzky 2005; 2006; Campbell 2005). We must therefore attend not only to the ways in which scripts shaped performance, but also to the ways in which performance practices shaped scripted drama. Scholars working along these lines have demonstrated that the cultural transmission of knowledge about foreign actresses’ featured roles and displays of histrionic skill profoundly transformed the female characters played by boy actors on the English stage (see Parolin 1998; 2012b; Brown 1999; 2012; 2015; Barasch 2000; 2001; Brown and Parolin 2005).

Recent scholarship has likewise demonstrated the influence of foreign actresses and dramatic forms on theatrical entertainments at the courts of Elizabeth I, Anne of Denmark (wife of James I), and Henrietta Maria (wife of Charles I), who retained troupes of actors and minstrels, and sponsored and participated in masques and other entertainments at Court and in royal progresses (see Veevers 1983; Erler 1991; Wynne-Davies 1992; Cole 1999; Barroll 2001; McManus 2002; Tomlinson 2005; Britland 2006; Ravelhofer 2006; 2008). Queen Elizabeth, who was described by Sir Francis Osborne after her death as “something too Theatrical for a virgine Prince” (1658, 61), sponsored a variety of entertainers including Italian *comici*, who performed at her Court in 1573–4 and 1577–8 (Poulsen 2005, 173). The latter troupe, led by Drusiano Martinelli, included three unnamed actresses, one of whom was likely his wife, Angelica Martinelli (W. Smith 1908, 557; Nungezer 1929, 245–6; Katritzky 2006, 89–90). The dismissive attitude of early theater historians toward Anne of Denmark and Henrietta Maria, both foreign queens consort who imported European theatrical tastes and traditions to the English Court, has been challenged by recent scholarship demonstrating their transformative influence on theatrical culture during the early to mid-seventeenth century (see Wynne-Davies 1992; Tomlinson 1992; 1995; 2005; McManus 2002; 2003; Gough 2002; 2003; 2005; Britland 2006). The Court masques in which these female monarchs and their noblewomen participated as performers, producers, and patrons were, as Marion Wynne-Davies argues, “collective cultural construct[s]” that allowed them access to and a shaping influence on both the political and cultural spheres: “Every stage of the masque’s production offered fresh possibilities for the insertion of female authorisation and creativity” (1992, 80–1). Grasping these possibilities requires a complex model of authorial agency, one that complements and extends recent studies of the agency of female playwrights (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 1996; 1998; Findlay 2006).

A more complex model of female authorial agency will help to shed light on that of both aristocratic and upwardly mobile, middling-sort women in dramatic production. Aristocratic women mounted dramatic entertainments at their country estates, entertained monarchs with lavish spectacles during royal progresses, and patronized male playwrights, who in turn dedicated printed plays to them (Bergeron 1981; Westfall 1990; 1997; Findlay, Hodgson-Wright, with Williams 2000; Findlay 2006; Mueller 2008b). The widowed Lady Elizabeth Russell entertained Queen Elizabeth at her country estate in Bisham in 1592, and Lady Alice Egerton, Dowager Countess of Derby entertained the Queen at Harefield in 1602 (Mueller 2011a). Country house entertainments included elaborate household banquets held by elite and would-be elite women of the yeomanry, urban citizenry, and mercantile classes, which not only provided

lavish sustenance but “an occasion for community gathering” and display; they were, as Sara Mueller argues, a form of “domestic theatre” in and of themselves, incorporating “foods that underwent astonishing transformations,” as well as “musical accompaniments,” and sometimes even “actors who performed with the foodstuffs” (2011b, 106–7). The women who mounted such banquets served as both “designers and producers” of these spectacular entertainments. Nonaristocratic women of means also patronized players and itinerant performers in their households. Joyce Jeffreys, a wealthy heiress who never married and supported herself by lending money at interest, paid a variety of entertainers, including traveling players, dancers, musicians, and singers, to perform at her home in Hereford in the early to mid-seventeenth century (Spicksley 2012).

Ordinary women helped finance dramatic activity as moneylenders and pawnbrokers by extending both small and large-scale loans to players and playing companies (Korda 2011, 54–92). Inn and alehouse keepers lent material support to dramatic activity: of the four London inns that served as playhouses during Shakespeare’s time, three (the Bell Savage, the Cross Keys, and the Bull) were owned or leased by women (Kathman 2009, 144). Ordinary women’s involvement in the financial end of the theater business includes the wives of theater people, such as Agnes Henslowe, wife of theater entrepreneur Philip Henslowe, who is recorded in her husband’s account book lending money to actors, and Elizabeth Hutchinson, wife of actor and theater owner Christopher Beeston, who was appointed sole executrix of his estate when he died because only she, he claimed, could fully understand his business affairs (Korda 2011, 26–7).

Through their financial savvy and expertise in various crafts and trades, working women contributed to theatrical production in London in a variety of ways, reminding us that performance relies on myriad behind-the-scenes contributions. These contributions were largely obscured by early theater historians’ disciplinary focus on regular employment rather than irregular “by-work.” This focus had the effect of eliding not only the unpaid labor of female kin in theater families, but also the paid labor of London’s broader female population, which was largely consigned to an informal yet nonetheless crucial “shadow” economy (Korda 2007; 2009; 2011). Guild and civic restrictions on female labor did not simply exclude women from “all-male” workforces and commercial institutions, but rather gave rise to “unregulated interstices” within and around them into which women “eagerly entered” (Ogilvie 2003, 329).

The professional stage drew on an ample supply of working women who flocked to London in search of employment during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Women worked actively in the second-hand clothing and pawnbroking trades upon which the theaters relied for costumes because they could not always afford to buy new, bespoke garments (Korda 1996; 2004; Jones and Stallybrass 2000). Protestant craftswomen from the Low Countries and France who flocked to London as religious refugees during the Dutch revolt and French wars of religion brought with them highly sought-after skills relating to the manufacture, laundering, and starching of luxury textiles and accessories (Korda 2011, 93–109, 114–33). Shakespeare lived in a rented room with a family of Huguenot tire-makers in London from 1602 to 1605, or possibly longer. His landlady, Marie Mountjoy, provided starched ruffs and head-attires to Queen Anne of Denmark and may have supplied professional theater people as well (Nicholl 2007, 171; Korda 2011, 109–13). The Admiral’s Men purchased head-attires from Mistresses Gossen and Calle (whose names suggest they were Dutch and French, respectively). These and other luxury attires in which immigrant women specialized appear frequently in Henslowe’s account books (Korda 2011, 109). Tirewomen not only fabricated such attires for playing companies, but also served as theatrical dressers to boy actors (Korda 2011, 35–9).

Other women worked inside London's playhouses on a regular basis offstage. Many of the "gatherers" responsible for collecting fees for general admission and further fees for entrance to the interior galleries were women: Margaret Brayne worked as a gatherer at the Theatre in Shoreditch in the late 1580s (Berry 1979, 36); Mary Phillips was paid by Queen Anne's Men in 1606–7 "for keeping the gallarie dores of the [Boar's Head] playhowse" (Eccles 1991, 456); Joan Hewes and Mary Phillips worked as gatherers at the Red Bull in 1607 (Gurr 2004, 234); and Elizabeth Wheaton was a regular gatherer at the Globe and Blackfriars in the 1620s (Bentley 1941–68, 2: 616). Women also worked as concessioners selling fruit, nuts, oysters, ale, and even cheap print (Korda 2008; 2011, 146–7). Female spectators were also quite visible inside the London playhouses; their influence on theatrical production is referred to in prologues and epilogues of plays addressed to them, and in play-texts featuring female theatergoers as characters (Levin 1989; L. Osborne 1991; 1999).

Thus, although London's professional playing companies never "regularly employed" women onstage, they did routinely rely on female labor and capital offstage. Acknowledging working women's unexceptional contributions to theatrical production behind the scenes may help to shed light on well-known exceptions to the rule of the "all-male" stage, including the demonstrably certain fact that at least one Englishwoman did appear on the London stage: Mary Frith, according to the *Consistory of London Correction Book*, appeared "vppon the stage" of "y^e ffortune" theater in 1611, where "in the publique viewe of all the people there p[rese]nte in mans apparrell" she "playd vppon her lute & sange a songe" (Mulholland 1977, 31; see also Eccles 1985; Ungerer 2000; Hutchings 2007; Wynne-Davies 2009). When viewed in light of women's imbrication in the commercial networks surrounding the theaters, Frith's known employment as a "broker" or fripper may help to explain both her "mans apparrell" and the commerce that first brought her into contact with Prince Henry's Men, making such contact seem far less exceptional (Korda 2005).

To what degree has the archival recovery of female participation in a broad range of theatrical activity reshaped the discipline of theater history and study of dramatic literature? The mere inclusion of "other" voices or forms of expression is not always enough to transform a discipline or canon, particularly if those included are deemed "separate but *not equal*" (Guillory 1995, 235). James Stokes observes that many scholars continue to "hedge" acknowledgment of women's roles in producing dramatic entertainment by assuming that they had only "marginal significance . . . in the development of early modern drama" as defined by the patriarchs of theater history (2015, 9). To alter the "aesthetic centerground" of the field, Clare McManus maintains, we must not only "insert women into an existing theater history," but work to "change the terms on which that history is written" (2009, 164, 167). This work begins, I have suggested, with a historiographical reckoning of the categories and methods upon which the discipline was founded.

In replacing a narrative of female absence with one of female presence, the recovery of female performance and production has clearly led to a broadening and diversification of theater history's *object*. It is less evident, however, that this recovery has led to a fundamental questioning of the discipline's *methods* and *aims*. Established in an attempt to define the discipline as a social science grounded in facts, rather than mere "feeling," these methods required its practitioners to discount evidence that did not meet the aim of documenting the real. It thus became important for theater historians to disregard as mere hearsay Thomas Coryate's claim, in praising the "grace, action [and] gesture" of Venetian actresses, "a thing I never saw before, though I have heard that it hath beene sometimes used in London" (1611, 247). Such "misinformation" or "gossip," they insisted, "cannot be accepted as proof," however "overpoweringly interesting to a student of

Shakespeare" it might be (Graves 1925, 195; A. H. 1885). This disavowal of feeling and desire (that of Coryate the theatergoer as well as that of the undisciplined scholar) in favor of hard data documenting the real oddly divorced the study of theatrical fact from the study of theatrical fiction. Theater history thus distinguished itself as a discipline from the study of drama and performance by ceding theater's status as an institution grounded in the *unreal* or illusory effects of the real.

This separation has had important implications not only for the study of theater but for the study of gender as well. To confine feminist theater history to the search for evidence of "real" women in the archives is to risk eliding what Rachel Poulsen has termed the "actress effect" (2005, 172), that is, the repertoire of performance practices associated with female performers and the "imaginative effects" they produced on contemporary audiences (McManus 2008, 437). These effects include those of the reality of gender produced in performance, which may help to account for Coryate's fascination with Venetian actresses – their ability to enact femininity through "grace, action [and] gesture" as skillfully as "any masculine Actor" – rather than simply their status as "real" women. A feminist theater history attuned to the heterogeneous effects of gender in performance, rather than dismissing their status "as proof," would have to recognize and account for their tantalizing power.

The significance of Moll Frith's appearance at the Fortune from this perspective lies not simply in its status as the sole demonstrably certain fact regarding a "real" Englishwoman performing on the professional stage – a singular exception to the rule that has defined the discipline of theater history – but rather in the imaginative effects her performance produced. We might observe, for example, that in announcing to "the company there p[re]sent y^t she thought many of them were of opinion y^t she was a man, but if any of them would come to her lodging they should finde that she is a woman" (Mulholland 1977, 31), Frith's speech-act counterfactually asserts the reality of her gender ("if any of them *would* come to her lodging they *should* finde that she is a woman") while deferring the discovery of the real that lies beneath her "mans apparrell" beyond the bounds of her performance. The effect of this performed deferral relies as much on hearsay, gossip, and misinformation (the "opinion y^t she was a man") as it does on the promised discovery of the real. For the duration of performance, that is, the desire to discover coexists with the desire to dwell in uncertainty.

Coryate's comparison of the "actress effects" produced by female performers with those of "any masculine Actor" suggests that the effects of gender in performance existed on a continuum and circulated between performers of different genders. Were early commedia actresses, whose *innamorata* roles frequently featured cross-dressing (Poulsen 2005, 173), imitating "masculine Actor[s]"? And were the boy-actors of the London stage pushed to perform leading roles in the style of commedia actresses (Brown 2015)? Or did they observe and imitate female masquers at Court (Barker 2015)? Opposing "real" female performers to boy-actors on the "all-male" stage occludes such lines of influence and risks reifying that which it seeks to dismantle, for to brand even the professional stage as "all-male" effectively elides the gender fluidity and effeminacy with which that stage was so strongly associated, not to mention the female labor upon which it relied.

Although we must be careful not to diminish the extent to which the professionalization of playing in England excluded or marginalized female performance idioms, we must also be attentive to the ways in which it was shaped by them. Pamela Allen Brown (2015, 55) makes a strong case for the transformative influence of foreign actresses on the English stage and dramatic canon, arguing that they revolutionized female impersonation through their creation of clever, articulate,

female roles and flamboyant performance styles, which required new heights of emotional expression. Their innovations in turn made female roles on the English stage “[m]ore self-aware and passionate, and more varied in [their] emotional palette” (see also Nicholson 2008). Such scholarship suggests the need for a theater history attuned to “feeling” as well as fact, and for a newly conceived canon defined by unexpected lines of influence that range across periods, geographic boundaries, genres, and genders, one that connects the London stage to a larger world of dramatic innovation developing within transnational theater and performance networks. Future scholarship might thereby illuminate the ways in which different performance cultures and dramatic canons shaped and reshaped one another, and the ways in which the dramatic canon itself was (en)gendered.

NOTES

- 1 Several women with financial and business interests in the London stage turned up by the Wallaces' research, including widows of professional actors who inherited shares in playing companies and playhouses, likewise appear only in the margins or appendices of their publications.
- 2 Smith went on to teach English and chair the Division of Drama at Vassar College, where she had earned her BA and where her archives are now located.

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“To travayle amongst our frendes”: Touring

Peter H. Greenfield

In 1572 the Earl of Leicester’s Men asked their patron for a license that would identify them as “your household Servaunts when we shall have occasion to travayle amongst our frendes as we do usuallye once a yere” (Chambers 1923, 2: 86). The spelling of “travayle” suggests a pun Shakespeare would have liked: to travel might well be travail, as the actors were at the mercy of the weather and their audiences’ generosity, not to mention local authorities who might clap them in jail as vagabonds. The less successful companies might well feel like Sir Oliver Owlett’s men in Marston’s *Histrion-Mastix*, who complain that they “travell, with pumps full of gravell ... And never can hold together” ([1610] 1939, 264). Hamlet expresses surprise that players should be visiting such an out-of-the-way place as Elsinore: “How chanches it they travel? Their residence [in the city], both in reputation and profit, were better both ways” (2.2.330–1). Such depictions have shaped the perceptions of touring held by theater historians with little interest in dramatic activity outside London. Yet the very fact that Leicester’s Men made annual tours their normal practice indicates that traveling in the provinces offered rewards that balanced the hardships.

Scholarship since the mid-1970s has developed a new appreciation for the significance of touring in early modern English theater, and enlarged our understanding of touring practices. The Records of Early English Drama (REED) project has greatly increased the known evidence of touring performances and made it accessible through its print volumes and its *Patrons and Performances* online database. Scholars working with that evidence have produced both overviews of touring and studies of individual companies, most notably McMillin and MacLean’s *The Queen’s Men and Their Plays* (1998), which in turn inspired *Performing the Queen’s Men*, a 2006 project involving skilled actors performing three plays from that company’s repertoire on a “tour” of six different venues and making their discoveries available online (McMaster University 2006–7). We now realize that although touring players might sometimes find their pumps full of gravel, and have to spend a night in a stable or even in the open, they could also expect to enjoy good food and comfortable lodgings when they visited the houses of nobles and gentry.

Players might have had to adjust to many different performance spaces on tour, but they could rely on a few proven favorite plays rather than constantly learning the new material demanded by London audiences. Carrying the name of an influential patron and knowing where they would be welcomed and well paid, a company of players could find touring tolerable and even desirable.

Leicester's Men in fact continued to tour each year even after the Theater was constructed in 1576 as their London base. In doing so, they were following a tradition of itinerant performing that predated the purpose-built theaters of London by centuries. Traveling minstrels appear in the earliest records that survive from many provincial towns and households – as early as 1277 at Canterbury, 1337 at Worcester. Minstrel troupes entertained the Dowager Queen Isabella at Hertford Castle in 1357, and Elizabeth Berkeley's household at Berkeley Castle at Christmas in 1420 (Gibson 2002, 28; Klausner 1990, 396; Household Accounts of the Dowager Queen Isabella 1357–8,; Douglas and Greenfield 1996, 347). "Stage players" began to appear in the records in the late fifteenth century, and their travels followed routes already established by the minstrels. Touring was thus the normal mode of operation for acting companies until the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and it remained important when some companies established themselves in London playhouses.

The Purposes of Playing

Aesthetically the players' purpose may have been "to hold the mirror up to nature," as Hamlet suggests, but the practical purposes of traveling were to make a living and to serve their patrons. The former purpose is apparent from the way that Owlett's Men "cry their play" – that is, announce their performance:

All they that can sing and say,
Come to the Towne-house and see a Play,
At three a clocke it shall beginne,
The finest play that e're was seene.
Yet there is one thing more in my minde,
Take heed you leave not your purses behinde.
(Marston [1610] 1939, 268)

If the audience did leave their purses behind, the players might suffer a fate similar to Pembroke's Men, whose 1593 tour failed to meet expenses, which forced the company to return to London and disband, selling off their costumes to pay their debts (Foakes and Rickert 1961, 280). Most companies, however, must have managed to make a profit on the road or at least break even. Unfortunately, the surviving evidence provides only a partial picture of any particular company's finances, even for brief periods. The Queen's Men received 12s. from Lord Berkeley when they visited his seat at Caludon Castle on the first of July 1594, and the city of Coventry gave them 40s. on the fourth (Greenfield 1983, 16; R. Ingram 1981, 341). The 52s. total for this week could have meant a considerable loss if they had no other source of income. Touring performers would have had to spend a minimum of a shilling per day per man for room and board. If they rode or had a horse to pull a wagon of costumes and props, food and stabling would cost another shilling per horse (W. Ingram 1993, 58–9). Since the Queen's Men numbered fourteen or more

at that time, their expenses for the week would have come to at least 56s., and probably much more, as we would expect the monarch's players to have horses and be otherwise well equipped. Their expenses for the entire year of 1594 would have topped four hundred pounds, of which only £7 14s. was covered by official rewards so far discovered (*Patrons and Performances*). No touring company could long sustain such losses, so the Queen's players must have done considerably better, both by making more and spending less.

Most likely they did spend less than the above estimates, since players visiting aristocratic households could expect to be fed and lodged gratis. Hamlet asks Polonius to "see the players well bestowed" – that is, lodged – and accounts from the Duke of Buckingham's household at Thornbury for 1507–8 and Francis Clifford's at Londesborough for 1598 show that players were often present at meals for several days, although the accounts might only record a single reward for playing (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 356–8; Palmer 2005, 275, 295–6). In fact, an itinerant singer claimed that he could maintain himself simply by going "from gentilmans house to gentilmans house vpon their benevolence" (Somerset 1994b, 280). Success, even survival, thus depended at least as much on a company's reception in gentlemen's houses as on playing in towns, where the expenses were much greater.

Players also had income beyond the rewards recorded in civic and household accounts. A description of a performance at Gloucester by R. Willis tells us that the first performance by a visiting troupe was "called the Mayors play, where every one that will comes in without money, the Mayor giving the players a reward as he thinks fit to shew respect unto them" (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 363). For other performances the players may have charged admission, as the Queen's Men did for their 1583 performance at the Red Lion Inn in Norwich, where "one wynsdon would have intred in at the gate but woold not haue payed," starting a fight with the gatekeeper that eventually involved sword-bearing actors and ended in the death of an audience member (Galloway 1984, 71). Sir Oliver Owlett's men may have intended to charge admission when they urged their potential audience to bring their purses, or they may have used the tactic employed by the actors of *Mankind*, stopping in the middle of performance to take a collection or "gathering." Gatherings were common at great house performances; the accounts of William Cecil (second Earl of Salisbury and grandson of Lord Burghley) show frequent payments made to entertainers when he was a guest in other lords' houses (Household Accounts of William Cecil 1612–68).

Survival also depended on the players having a patron. His (or, rarely, her) name on a letter or warrant kept the players out of jail and got them into guildhalls and aristocratic residences across the land. Without a license from someone holding at least the rank of baron, traveling players faced imprisonment as wandering rogues and vagabonds under the 1572 Vagabonds Act (Chambers 1923, 4: 270). With such a license, the first thing they did on coming to a town was to visit the mayor "to enforme him what noble-mans servants they are, and so to get license for their publike playing," as Willis tells us. Then, "if the Mayor like the Actors, or would shew respect to their Lord and Master, he appoints them to play their first play before himself and the Aldermen and common Counsell of the City" (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 362–3). The identity of the players' "Lord and Master" typically determined whether and how much they would be allowed to perform. A 1580 Gloucester ordinance permitted the Queen's players to perform three times over three days, but players whose patron held the rank of baron and above could perform only twice over two days, and other players could play but once (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 306–7).

It was also the patron's name – and not the size or skill of the company – that usually determined the size of the reward the players received. Civic and household accounts rarely mention

the title of the play or the identity of individual players. The one piece of information they nearly always record to identify an expenditure on players is the name of the patron, and the amount of the reward reflects the rank and influence associated with that name. The largest rewards were given to the players of the monarch: at Gloucester in 1582–3, the Queen's Men received 30s., while the Earl of Oxford's players got 16s. 8d. and Lord Stafford's a mere 10s. Local influence might count as much as rank, since Gloucester gave 20s. to the players of Lord Chandos, who lived nearby at Sudeley Castle and represented the county in Parliament. Lord Berkeley's players received only 13s, despite their patron's owning much land in Gloucestershire, as Berkeley was less in favor at Court than Chandos (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 308).

If the patron's influence could help the players make a living on the road, their traveling could serve the patron by spreading that influence. At a time when power and influence were maintained largely through theatrical means, actors who could move about the country provided an inexpensive equivalent of a royal progress. Just as the size and richness of the monarch's entourage on progress reminded people where power and authority lay in the nation, so in a lesser way did the livery the players wore and the license they carried. In addition to advertising the patron's prestige, the players might make useful local connections, and even act as informants. Traveling players were, after all, "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time," who could report to their powerful patron just how much respect particular individuals and towns had shown to them and to him. The ambitious Earl of Leicester fully realized this capability of traveling players, and his company was the best known and most widely traveled during the years when he was striving both to become royal consort and to spread Protestantism throughout the country (McMillin and MacLean 1998, 20–3).

The players' civic and aristocratic hosts could also benefit from a tour performance beyond simply being entertained. The Queen's Men's visit to the Earl of Derby and his son, Lord Strange, at New Park (near Ormskirk, Lancashire) in 1588 would have boosted the Stanley family's stature in the eyes of their clients and neighbors, especially if the play had been *The True Tragedie of Richard the third*, which shows the Stanleys as staunch supporters of the Queen's grandfather, Henry Tudor (Manley 2009). Moreover, each visit of a touring troupe involved a subtle negotiation of the power relations between patron and host authority, regardless of what the players performed. In identifying themselves to the lord or mayor, the players asked that their patron's influence be recognized by allowing them to perform and paying them a reward. Yet the players' request simultaneously recognized the authority of the lord over his household or the mayor and council over what happened within the town.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, towns were receptive to traveling players at least partly because urban elites found that the symbolic effect of a tour performance as an advertisement of the patron's power could also provide much-needed support for their own authority. Most provincial towns suffered economic decline in the sixteenth century as London came to dominate the economy. At the same time, immigration from the countryside swelled their populations, resulting in widespread poverty and increasing social tension. The Reformation had brought an end to most of the public ceremonies that ritually reaffirmed the hierarchical social structure of the community, such as the Corpus Christi procession, in which the civic officials and guild members wore the garb and symbols of their offices and walked in order of their social positions (Phythian-Adams 1972). Urban elites thus had to find new ways to ensure recognition of their authority, including giving the mayor a chair of office, enlarging the ceremonial mace, and building or renovating the town hall (Tittler 1991, 98–128). When traveling players were licensed to perform in that town hall, in a space that itself represented civic authority, they too

became a representation of that authority, especially when the performance was a “mayor’s play” like that described by Willis, which the audience attended for free – effectively as guests of the mayor. This effect was all the stronger because the players in some ways represented the very forces which threatened the dominant order. They traveled freely, they made their living by playing, and that playing involved temporarily taking on a range of social positions, while outside their roles they did not fit anywhere in the social order (Montrose 1996, 55–6). Yet because they did their playing as servants of a noble patron, and under the auspices of the local authority, they offered the urban audience a representation of potentially subversive forces that in fact served and reaffirmed the existing social order.

Repertory

What the players performed in these halls and inns is rarely known. The names of plays almost never appear in accounts or even in highly detailed records of court cases. The only touring performance that is both named and described in considerable detail is the one Willis saw at Gloucester in the 1570s:

The play was called (the Cradle of security,) wherein was personated a King or some great Prince with his Courtiers of severall kinds, amongst which three Ladies were in speciall grace with him; and they keeping him in delights and pleasures, drew him from his graver Counsellors, hearing of Sermons, and listning to good counsell, and admonitions, that in the end they got him to lye downe in a cradle upon the stage, where these three Ladies joyning in a sweet song rocked him asleepe, that he snorted againe, and in the meane time closely conveyed under the cloaths were withall he was covered, a vizard like swines snout upon his face, with three wire chaines fastned thereunto, the other end whereof being holden severally by those three Ladies, who fall to singing againe, and then discovered his face, that the spectators might see how they had transformed him, going on with their singing, whilst all this was acting, there came forth of another doore at the farthest end of the stage, two old men, the one in blew with a Serjeant at Armes, his mace on his shoulder, the other in red with a drawn sword in his hand, and leaning with the other hand upon the others shoulder, and so they two went along in a soft pace round about by the skirt of the Stage, till at last they came to the Cradle, whereat all the Courtiers with the three Ladies and the vizard all vanished; and the desolate Prince starting up bare faced, and finding himself thus sent for to judgement, made a lamentable complaint of his miserable case, and so was carried away by wicked spirits. This Prince did personate in the morall, the wicked of the world; the three Ladies, Pride, Covetousnesse, and Luxury, the two old men, the end of the world, and the last judgement. (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 363)

Two titles mentioned in the Bristol records from the 1570s sound like similar moral interludes: “what mischief worketh in the mynd of man” and “the Court of Comfort” (Pilkinton 1997, 116). Such plays may well have remained the staple of smaller companies that played only in the provinces.

The major companies toured with the repertory developed for their London theaters. When Edward Alleyn and Lord Strange’s Men performed “hary of cornwall” at Bristol in 1593, they had already performed it several times at the Rose (Pilkinton 1997, 114; Foakes and Rickert 1961, 16–18). Presumably Alleyn would have played Tamburlaine and his other famous Marlowe roles on tour, and the Lord Chamberlain’s/King’s Men would have done their most recent

successes by Shakespeare. Even companies that operated exclusively in the provinces might play London hits, once the texts became available in print. At Christmastide 1609–10, the players of Sir Richard Cholmeley visited his Yorkshire neighbor Sir John Yorke at Gowthwaite Hall and offered Sir John a choice of four plays: *King Lear* (or possibly the older *King Leir*), *Pericles*, *The Travailes of Three English Brothers*, and *The Play of St. Christopher*. *Pericles* and *The Three English Brothers* had debuted in the capital in the recent past, as had *Lear*, if it was indeed Shakespeare’s play that Cholmeley’s troupe had ready (Palmer 2009b, 103). Henry Clifford’s household at Skipton Castle enjoyed Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* in February 1636 (Palmer 2005, 276). A relatively small number of such plays, already proven winners with audiences, would have been enough to supply a touring company’s short stay in any one place. Indeed, one of the attractions of touring could have been that the players would not have to be constantly learning new plays, unlike in London, where a constantly changing repertory was required to fill the theaters (Somerset 1994a, 60). Touring may even have made a significant contribution to the development of the players’ art, for only touring would have provided the time and repetition needed to develop characterizations and explore different options for line readings, business, and blocking.

Company Size

Scholars used to explain the so-called “bad quartos,” like that of *Hamlet*, as being the product of touring companies cutting the London texts to suit fewer actors and difficult playing conditions on the road. (See Thomson 2010, 526–30, for a concise history of this hypothesis.) This theory assumes that unsophisticated provincial audiences would be satisfied with such abridged and even botched texts. However, provincial audiences often included nobles, gentry and urban elites who frequently traveled to London and were not likely to accept second-rate entertainment, especially if they were sponsoring it for family, friends, and clients. Take, for example, Sir Richard Paulet, of Herriard and Freefolk, Hampshire. Although a decidedly minor figure on the national stage, Paulet spent a part of each year in London, sitting in Parliament, attending to financial and legal business, going to performances, and buying books. One of the books he purchased in 1607 was a copy of Middleton’s *The Puritan, or the Widow of Watling Street*, recently performed by Paul’s Boys (Household Accounts of Sir Richard Paulet 1607–10, fol. 1v). Would Paulet have tolerated a much-reduced performance of that play by a company visiting him at Freefolk, or performing at Winchester or Salisbury, where he sat as a justice? Touring companies would have wanted to offer such audiences what had been successful in London, including any spectacular effects or business that had contributed to that success (Thomson 2010, 533–4).

The records in fact show that companies went on tour with enough actors to perform plays from their London repertory without cutting the text extensively. Early in the period touring companies were probably small in number – the “four men and a boy” who act the play-within-a-play in *Sir Thomas More*. The play Willis saw at Gloucester in the 1570s, *The Cradle of Security*, requires a cast of six, and *The Murder of Gonzago* – clearly meant to represent an older kind of play than *Hamlet* – calls for a company ranging from five to seven. Some troupes may have remained this small right through the period. As early as 1577, however, Leicester’s Men appeared at Southampton with twelve actors, Bath’s eleven, and Worcester’s, Stafford’s and Delawarre’s ten each. Seventeenth-century troupes could be even larger: twenty players of Lady Elizabeth visited Plymouth in 1617–18, and Norwich saw twenty-eight in the King’s Revels Company in 1635.

The fifteen actors Sir Richard Cholmeley's regional troupe brought to Gowthwaite Hall in 1609–10 could have managed *King Lear* or *Pericles* easily, needing to double only the smaller parts (*Book of Fines (mayors' accounts) of Southampton* 1488–1594, fol. 167; Gurr 1996, 43; Palmer 2009b, 103). The Queen's Men were formed in 1583 with twelve sharers, and analysis of the play-texts associated with the Queen's Men in 1594 indicates that at least fourteen actors were required to cover all the parts, even with many of the smaller parts being doubled. The Performing the Queen's Men project confirmed this number in practice as the minimum needed to present three plays from that company's 1594 repertory: *King Lear*, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (McMillin and MacLean 1998, 120; Cockett 2009, 231–4). That experiment suggested that a troupe might choose plays for touring based not only on how popular the plays were, but also because they had similar requirements in terms of numbers of actors, costumes, props, and the like. The throne needed for *Lear* could be used in *Famous Victories* as well, as could most of the costumes and many of the hand props. On the other hand, the players would have had to believe the spectacle of *Friar Bacon* had sufficient impact on tour audiences to justify carrying the Brazen Head around with them, although its use was obviously limited to a single play.

Few touring companies had a consistent size and only those with London theaters as bases managed a continuous, relatively stable existence for any length of time. For the majority of traveling troupes the situation was much more fluid. "Lord Berkeley's Men" appear in the records from 1557 to 1612, but there are several lengthy gaps when they are not mentioned (e.g. 1557 to 1577). Some of the gaps may be due to the chance survival of records, but it is likely that Berkeley formed or adopted a group of players at a particular moment in his life, a group that later disbanded or moved on to another patron, so that when Berkeley later decided to patronize a troupe again it had to be put together from scratch, perhaps without any of the prior members. Even over a short period a playing troupe might divide or shrink for reasons financial or logistical, then augment its numbers – perhaps for holiday performances at its patron's seat – by combining with another troupe or adding local performers such as town waits or household musicians. Especially talented performers might combine leading a company with giving solo performances. One "Disley" appears in northern provincial records from 1601 to 1633 – sometimes with Lord Dudley's players, briefly with the Earl of Shrewsbury's, but most often by himself or with a troupe identified only by his leadership (Palmer 2007, 16–20). Robert Armin appears to have done much the same in the years before he joined Shakespeare's company, touring with Lord Chandos' players as their clown while also appearing solo in gentlemen's houses, playing all the parts himself ([1600] 1972, sig. D1v)

Playing Places and Conditions

A few towns had "playhouses," although they were existing buildings converted to performance spaces rather than purpose-built theaters like the Globe. Bristol had two in the early seventeenth century – the Wine Street Playhouse and Redcliffe Hall – and York had one, while the playhouses in smaller towns like Prescott, Tonbridge, and Witton were likely intended for schoolboy players rather than touring professionals (Pilkinton 1997, xxxvii–xl; Johnston and Rogerson 1979, 530–1; George 1991, 80–2; Gibson 2007; Baldwin, Clopper, and Mills 2007). More common were town halls or guild halls, as well as the halls of schools and great houses. Halls are the best attested places for tour performances because the authorities who owned and ran them,

such as aristocrats and town councils, kept records of the rewards they gave the performers. Churches, private houses, and especially inns could also offer playing spaces, although such performances typically went unrecorded unless they caused a disturbance or property damage that resulted in a court case. In smaller towns or parishes, the players might use the church itself, as at Doncaster, or the church house, as at Sherborne, Dorset (Wasson 1997, 36; Hays 1992). At Norwich, players performed in the Common Hall, but also at the Red Lion Inn. Southampton prohibited performing in the town hall in 1620, blaming players for broken benches, "fleas and other beastlie things." The Council ordered "That hereafter yf anie suche staige or poppett plaiers must be admitted in this towne That they provide their places for their representacions in their Innes," the use of "their Innes" suggesting that inns were a familiar place to play (*Court Leet Book of Southampton* 1620, fol. 16v).

Traveling players thus had to adapt to performance spaces that varied greatly in size and arrangement. At the Cavendish family seat at Hardwick New Hall, the great chamber measures thirty-three feet by sixty-six feet, one of the largest indoor spaces players were likely to encounter (Palmer 2009a, 28). The hall at Winchester College is similarly sized at sixty-five by thirty feet and could accommodate the entire community of 105 students, masters and fellows (Cowling and Greenfield 2008, 18). Gowthwaite Hall, however, was much smaller; Sir John Yorke's family, retainers and friends had to share a space only twenty feet by thirty feet with Sir Richard Cholmeley's fifteen players for their performance at Christmas 1609 (*Patrons and Performances*). The guildhalls that still stand at Leicester and Coventry fit between those extremes, but Southampton's guildhall, a small chamber perched on top of the Bargate, must have been even more cramped.

Occasionally the players were provided with a raised stage or the audience was raised to provide better sight lines. Willis mentions that his father sat on a bench, where he "saw and heard very well," since the players of *The Cradle of Security* performed on stage, and Gloucester's chamberlains often paid for the construction of "a skaffold for playors to playe one," as did the bursars of Winchester College (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 363, 300; Cowling 2007, 110). Evidence of such stages is relatively rare, however, so the more typical situation must have seen the actors at floor level, playing to audience members seated on the benches that were a regular feature of the space, and perhaps other audience standing behind.

If they were playing in a hall with a kitchen screen at one end, the players could use the space in front of that screen much the way they did the stage in front of the tiring house facades of the London theaters. Robert Armin describes doing so when he was touring with Lord Chandos' men: "In a Gentlemans house ... the Players dressed them in the Gentlemans Kitchin, & so entred through the Entry into the Hall" ([1600] 1972, sig. C4v). They could not, however, count on finding a consistent arrangement in the many venues they visited. The audience might be arranged on three sides as in the theaters, on one or two, or on all four. The actors might enter the playing space from behind, from the sides, or even from the front, through the audience. The space might be arranged to seat dignitaries on the opposite side of the playing space from the rest of the audience, so that the other spectators would be watching the worthies as well as the performance, while the actors tried to play to both groups. Visiting companies would have had only a short time before each performance to examine each space and decide how to fit their performance to it. The Performing the Queen's Men project experimented with these challenges by sending its troupe to different locations intended to represent conditions a touring company might encounter at a great house, a town hall, and an inn. Only familiarity with their small repertory of plays and with each other made adapting to the different spaces possible, along with

some simple blocking protocols, such as always entering from one side of the stage and exiting at the other. Company members characterized their experience as one of constantly “changing, evolving, and adapting to meet the pragmatic challenge[s]” of touring (Cockett 2009, 235; cf. Weingust, Chapter 19 in this volume).

Itineraries

London-based companies took to the road most often in the summer, particularly because that was the season when the authorities sometimes closed the playhouses due to the increased threat of plague. Other companies toured throughout the year, as the Southampton mayor’s accounts for 1593–4 suggest: the mayor rewarded the Earl of Worcester’s players on October 18, 1593, the Queen’s players on November 26, and Lord Chandos’ on the 28th. Lord Montegle’s players visited Southampton in March 1594, those of Lord Morley and the Earl of Derby in May. The Queen’s players returned in August, and Worcester’s in September (*Book of Fines* 1488–1594, fols. 247v–250v). Two years earlier the Queen’s Men had also visited in August, and Lord Morley’s in May, showing that companies habitually followed itineraries that brought them to the same places at the same time of year (fol. 237). When Lord Strange’s Men went on tour in 1593, they knew their itinerary well enough that Edward Alleyn could write his wife from Bristol and confidently ask her to send to him at Shrewsbury or York (Foakes and Rickert 1961, 276).

Companies that had London playhouses and appeared at Court developed itineraries that looped out from London and back again. One of the most popular circuits led to Norwich – England’s second-largest city – with stops at Ipswich, Cambridge, and elsewhere in East Anglia, including towns and aristocratic residences. Another led southeast through Canterbury to the Cinque Ports. To the southwest, the usual route went to Southampton and west to Exeter and perhaps Plymouth, then curved back northeast to Bristol, the third-largest town. From there the tour might return to London, or proceed north along the River Severn to Gloucester, Worcester, and Shrewsbury, then turn south via Coventry and Leicester, or continue north as far as Carlisle and Newcastle.

We still have only partial evidence for the itineraries of even the best-attested companies. Using the *Patrons and Performances* database, we can trace the Queen’s Men in 1593 from Oxford on February 25 to Bridgwater on the Somerset coast on April 3. They then turned north to reach Lord Berkeley’s household at Caludon Castle near Coventry on June 3 and Bess of Hardwick at Chatsworth on the 28th. Continuing north, they reached Kendal in July or early August, before turning east to reach Newcastle around August 25. Returning south, they played York in September, Norwich on October 18, and Southampton on November 26. Records dated only by the year show the company also visited Faversham and Maidstone in Kent, perhaps between Norwich and Southampton; others suggest that Bridgwater was part of a southwestern loop that also included Lyme Regis, Exeter, Plymouth, Barnstaple, and Bath. Many other places for which no records survive must have provided other opportunities. The extant Clifford household books do not begin until the following year, but they show that in 1595 the Queen’s Men visited Londesborough, which would have fit easily into their northern swing of the summer of 1593 (Palmer 2005, 295). Lord Chandos hosted the Queen’s progress at Sudeley Castle in 1592, and her players might well have paid him a visit the following year on their way from Gloucester to Coventry.

The routes the players followed were determined by topography and roads, as well as by the prospects for profit. Many of the companies that played in Southampton bypassed Winchester, no doubt because the main road from London to the port of Southampton ran several miles east of Winchester. To visit the cathedral city meant a detour on a rough road over some considerable hills, and the take from the smaller city might not appear worth the effort, even if a visit to Winchester College could be added. Water courses meant relatively easy travel, so that players visiting Gloucester were usually following the Severn from Bristol to Worcester and Shrewsbury, not on their way to Oxford, which would have meant climbing up the steep Cotswold Edge. Of course the roads and rivers were only worth following if the players knew that substantial rewards lay along their path. Undoubtedly they privileged the most populous towns – Norwich, Bristol, and the like – and great houses where they could expect a warm and lucrative reception. Smaller towns and households would sustain them along the way to the big paydays. Places as small as Bridgwater in Somerset and Ashburton in Devon (see Wasson 1986) saw players often because they lay on the roads from Bristol to Exeter to Plymouth.

Visits to great houses must often have been prearranged with the lord, or the players learned along the road that a particular lord was in residence, making a visit to his seat worth the effort to get there. After all, the players did not travel in isolation. Others on the road included aristocrats, merchants, people on government or legal business, messengers and the like, and when the players stopped for the night they could get information from innkeepers, vittleers, stablers, and others who served the travelers (Palmer 2005, 278). No doubt the Queen's Men had been tipped off when they showed up at the Stanley residence at New Park in October 1588, as the Earl of Derby and Lord Strange had only recently returned there to celebrate their roles in defending the nation from the Spanish (Manley 2009, 51–2).

Itineraries also reflected the geographical spread of a patron's influence, since that was where they could expect the largest rewards. The monarch's players ranged most widely, matched only by those of ambitious lords like the Earl of Leicester. The players of lesser patrons might concentrate near their master's residences and holdings. The majority of the recorded appearances of Lord Berkeley's players occurred in Gloucestershire, Somerset, and Warwickshire, near Berkeley Castle itself and the lord's seat at Caludon Castle near Coventry. Lord Wharton's players appeared only in the north – mainly at Carlisle, the closest large town to Wharton Hall (near Kirkby Stephen), and at the seat of Wharton's Clifford relatives at Londesborough (Palmer 2005, 294).

The End of Traveling

The seventeenth century brought changes that disrupted the players' traditional routes and practices, so that touring steadily declined and had all but disappeared by the time Parliament banned public performing in 1642. Coventry rewarded traveling players more often than any other provincial town – an average of six a year in the 1590s and eight a year in the first decade of the seventeenth century. But that average shrank to four between 1610 and 1619, then to two in the 1620s and 1630s. Other towns saw similar drops in the number of visits, as the number of companies on tour decreased, and the few that remained reduced the amount of traveling they did.

The causes of this decline in traveling were various and complex. Shortly after his accession in 1603, James I issued royal patents that transformed the Lord Chamberlain's Men into the King's Men, the Lord Admiral's Men into Prince Henry's Men, and the Earl of Worcester's players into

Queen Anne's Men. A revision of the Elizabethan statute against vagabonds eliminated the legal right of the nobility to license players. In theory, James had reduced the number of licensed companies to three, and given provincial towns legal justification to prevent performances by anyone else; in practice, touring patterns changed little for the first five years of James's reign. By 1610, however, both Norwich and Leicester had begun to pay companies without royal patrons to leave town without playing. Other towns denied such troupes any reward at all. Before long, even royal companies found some towns using this tactic of paying the actors not to act.

The towns' antagonism toward players resulted largely from the growth of Puritanism among urban elites, although that Puritanism expressed itself as much in economic concerns and in resistance to the King as it did in moral or theological antitheatricalism. The 1580 Gloucester ordinance that restricted the number of performances a company could give reveals what worried civic authorities. Gloucester's council felt it should put restraints on players because they "allure seruauntes, apprentices and iorneyman & other of the worst desposed persons to leudenes and lightnes of life." But the ordinance also complains that players encourage "the maintenance of ideleness" among these same persons, and "Drawe away greate Sommes of money from diuerse persons" – directly away from the servants, apprentices and journeymen; but also indirectly from their employers, whose work sat neglected (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 306–7). In the sixteenth century these moral and economic objections to players were balanced by the civic authorities' desire to maintain good relations with the players' patrons and exploit some of the symbolic effect of the players' visits to reaffirm the local social order. Increasing tension between the Crown and urban elites meant that by early in the seventeenth century mayors might no longer wish to "shew respect to [the players'] Lord and Master" nor to associate their own authority symbolically with that of the King and his family. Similar tensions closed many great houses to players, as some nobles and gentry began to shift toward Puritanism and resist Stuart absolutism.

Many towns passed ordinances designed to regulate or even eliminate public performance. In 1595 Canterbury prohibited playing on the Sabbath and after nine o' clock at night, and restricted visiting companies to performing only two days out of any thirty. These restrictions effectively eliminated Canterbury from the players' itineraries. Between 1603 and 1642, only twenty companies received rewards at Canterbury, and fifteen of those were to leave town without performing (Gibson 1995, 7–8). As long as such restrictions were relatively rare, players could still survive on the road, performing where they were still welcome, and making brief forays to less receptive towns and houses to pick up their payments not to play. As more and more places paid them not to play, traveling became less and less viable, since the official rewards – without additional gifts or gate receipts – had never met expenses. The southeastern route long popular with itinerant entertainers could still make money without Canterbury. Once Maidstone, Hythe, and other towns also restricted playing, setting off for the southeast coast became a risky business, even if the players still had hope of a decent payday at Dover, Lydd, or Rye (Gibson 1995, 2–3, 11).

Only companies with royal patrons continued to tour consistently into the 1620s and 1630s, and the towns that welcomed them tended to be those that remained sympathetic to the Crown. In general, traveling players were more welcome the farther they went from London – into areas where the old religion and old traditions lived on. Even nonroyal companies could still find receptive households in remote places like Workington, Cumberland, where Sir Patricius Curwen rewarded the players of his fellow Cumberlander, Lord Wharton, in 1629, or Dunkenhalgh Manor, Lancashire, where Thomas Walmsley hosted Lord Strange's players (from Lathom, Lancashire) in 1634 and 1636 (Douglas and Greenfield 1986, 129; George 1991, 207, 210).

Finally, even the most receptive town of all, Coventry, gave its last reward to visiting players early in 1642, and that entry in the civic chamberlains' accounts is followed by an ominous one: “given to the trumpeters of the troopes which came with the Lord Brooke & the lord Gray x s. the xxvijth of August 1642” (R. Ingram 1981, 447). With the troops came the end of the long tradition of traveling players.

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Progresses and Court Entertainments

R. Malcolm Smuts

Renaissance courts employed a variety of theatrical forms, including some shared with the public stage and others that were quite distinctive, notably the English masque, the French *ballet de cour* and Italian court opera. These complex genres, in which monarchs and prominent courtiers performed leading roles, included songs and lengthy dances from which modern ballet evolved, along with painted scenery, stage machinery and extremely opulent costumes (Meagher 1966, ch. 4; Orgel and Strong 1973; Ravelhofer 1998; 2006). This acoustical and scenic apparatus evoked a mythic world peopled by gods and heroes, while expressing philosophical ideas through emblematic formulas derived from manuals like Caesar Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593). Court theater therefore shared the visual language of historical and allegorical painting, a parallel further enhanced by lighting effects: Inigo Jones once described masques "as nothing else but pictures with light and motion" (Chambers 1912, 119). Many productions culminated in a "scene of light," in which the main performers were suddenly revealed within an enclosure lit by dozens of hidden candles, as if suffused with a supernatural radiance, like religious figures in certain baroque canvases (Meagher 1966, 199, ch. 5; Astington 1999, 96–7).

In Jacobean England, Inigo Jones further enhanced the visual impact of these spectacles by adopting the Italian invention of the proscenium arch to frame the stage, along with perspective scenery painted on moving shutters that could be rapidly changed to produce an illusion of magical transformation. The proscenium defined a boundary between the imaginary world on stage and the real world of the audience, but this remained a permeable frontier, because at the end of a performance the masquers would descend from the stage to choose dance partners from the audience. The main royal spectator also sat on a platform directly in front of the stage, in full view of the audience, allowing masquers to address him as a divine source of order. Masques therefore collapsed the boundary between the mythic world on stage and the "real" world of the Court audience, implying that the roles assumed during a performance were somehow an

extension or revelation of the actual positions occupied by the royal family and its courtiers in the government of the kingdom.

In a series of provocative studies published in the 1960s and 1970s, Stephen Orgel referred to these arrangements as a “poetics of space” and described the effect as an “illusion of power” that encouraged a view that the king’s mind had the ability to control the political world in the way that a Platonic God controlled the cosmos, through the power of ideas (Orgel 1965; 1975; Orgel and Strong 1973; cf. Butler 2008, 12–18). This interpretation of Court masques as the expression of an absolutist philosophy meshed with New Historicist interest in the ways that literature and theater instantiated relations of power, helping to inspire further studies of relations between politics and Court entertainments. These additional studies in turn led to greater awareness of ways in which theatrical events, even when celebrating royal power and virtue on some levels, might simultaneously register implicit criticisms while displaying political tensions and rivalries within the Court itself. Interpretations of Court theater have therefore become increasingly nuanced and complex, moving away from a model that treated them essentially as propaganda or expressions of absolutist ideology, to encompass interest in the ways in which performances sometimes expressed rivalries and negotiations over power among kings, queens, and leading courtiers, as well as how audiences and readers of published accounts of these entertainments might respond to them in differing ways. But attention to relationships between speeches, performance practices, including dance, music, scenery and costuming, and spatial relationships has remained fundamental.

Space and Performance

When approached through a formalistic analysis in terms of structured relationships between words, scenery and the configuration of seating arrangements within the Whitehall Banqueting House, Stuart masques do appear to operate in much the way Orgel described. By privileging the king as both the primary spectator and the symbolic center of the masque world, these entertainments conformed to the more general tendency of Court life to treat the monarch as the epicenter of the social and political universe (Adamson 1999b). But it does not necessarily follow that performers and spectators perceived masques as unqualified expressions of the king’s absolute power. The spatial and visual codes of Court life were far more complex than such a monolithic view implies (Fantoni, Gorse, and Smuts 2009; Dillon 2010). To read these entertainments in a more sophisticated way, we need to begin with a fuller understanding of the Court’s structure and ritual codes.

Several points emerge from a considerable body of research devoted to this subject since the 1980s. Most courts were to varying degrees polycentric, in the sense that they comprised the household not only of a king but a queen, one or more royal princes and sometimes a great minister-favorite like Cardinal Wolsey in the 1520s or the Duke of Buckingham a century later (Duindam 2003). These households and the men or women who headed them all belonged to the kingdom’s ruling group but they did not always agree on every issue, and at times significant rivalries developed among them. Rather than expressing a uniform Court philosophy, some entertainments gestured toward disagreements and political maneuvers within the royal family or the monarch’s immediate entourage. The Earl of Leicester’s entertainment for Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575 and the masquing of Prince Henry and the queens Anna and Henrietta Maria have all been analyzed from this perspective (Barroll 2001; Butler 2008; Britland 2006).

In addition to serving as the monarch's household and center of royal ceremony, the Court was a place of political and social interaction and negotiation, involving the monarch, the monarch's great ministers, provincial peers and gentry, and foreign ambassadors. People were always coming and going from royal palaces, sometimes in processions of considerable splendor, and by the seventeenth century a sophisticated urban milieu had developed in the suburban parishes immediately adjacent to the main royal palace of Whitehall, as growing numbers of provincial landowners crowded into the Court's neighborhood during the winter months. Political and social competition at Court turned largely on questions of access to the ruler and to a lesser extent the ruler's close associates, which in turn was shaped by the division of Court space into separate zones, each with its own staff and ceremonial rules. The most exclusive area consisted of the privy chamber and bedchamber, in effect a suite containing the monarch's private apartment and the room where the Privy Council met. Only the monarch, the privy chamber and bedchamber servants headed by the Groom of the Stool, Privy Councilors, and a small number of other privileged individuals had an automatic right of access to this section of the palace. According to David Starkey (1987), the privy chamber therefore provided the setting for a "politics of intimacy," in which the king or queen might interact informally with chosen associates away from the public gaze. Beyond the privy chamber lay a throne room known as the presence chamber used for semipublic ceremonies, to which a properly dressed gentlemen might normally gain admission, followed by the great chamber or guard chamber staffed by the Yeomen of the Guard.

All these rooms together comprised the "Household of Magnificence" under the Lord Chamberlain, the ceremonial center of the royal household. From them passageways led to the Chapel Royal, which had its own choir, whose younger members sometimes doubled as an acting company, courtiers' lodgings, service areas like the royal kitchens, and the largest and most public ceremonial rooms, the great hall and (from the Elizabethan period) a banqueting house, where most Court masques were performed. Finally the public streets around the palace and the River Thames served as staging areas for great Court ceremonies like coronations, royal funerals and openings of Parliaments, as well as more casual movements by the monarch that often provided opportunities for theatrical displays. On April 23, 1559, for example, Elizabeth supped at the Earl of Pembroke's London house and then took a boat trip along the river, attracting "hundreds of boats and barges rowing about her and thousands of people thronging at the waterside ... rejoicing to see her and partaking of the music and sights" (Nichols 1823, 1: 67). A few months later another large crowd thronged around the Queen at Greenwich, as she watched military exercises by the London militia, tilts by the Court guard, fireworks displays and a masque performed within a newly erected timber banqueting house (Nichols 1823, 1: 73). As a general rule, the farther the monarch proceeded beyond the privy chamber, the more accessible he or she became. But in compensation the ceremonial apparatus of guards and attendants grew larger, more magnificent, and more intimidating. Even the luxurious accoutrements of Court life tended to assume different forms roughly corresponding to spatial location, from the richly decorated barges and coaches used in public to the cabinet containing the ruler's prize collection of jewels and miniature paintings kept in the bedchamber for display to special guests.

The movement of people through Court space was always both theatrical and politically charged, expressing relationships of privilege and favor that people closely observed. Seating arrangements at a banquet, the order of march during a procession, and the arrangement of furniture as well as ceremonial attendants at a diplomatic reception invariably reflected precise

gradations of honor and favor in ways that sometimes provoked fierce arguments. Theatrical performances added another layer to this semiotic system without altering its fundamental structures. For example, seating arrangements for ambassadors at masques caused endless disputes, precisely because contemporaries regarded them both as a register of the relative prestige of foreign states and clues to shifts in the monarch's foreign policy. Subtle gestures might further amplify the message conveyed by the placement of an ambassador's chair. During her first Christmas season in England, Queen Anne demonstrated her sympathy for peace with Spain not only by inviting the Spanish Ambassador, but not his French counterpart, to attend her masque as guest of honor but by wearing a red favor in her costume, red being the heraldic color of the Spanish Habsburgs and apparently also of the Ambassador (Cano-Echevarría and Hutchings 2012).

These spatially inflected signals might also continue after a performance, for example during the banquet that followed a masque. Many modern critics have interpreted *Prince Henry's Barriers*, a masque-like performance at a Court joust in early 1610, as reflecting tensions between Henry's militant support for international Protestantism and the pacifism of James I (Strong 1986; Butler 2008, 167–82). A previously undiscovered account of the banquet following the joust, held at Henry's palace of St. James but presided over by the King, sheds doubt on this conclusion.¹ Written by the guest of honor, the Dutch diplomat Noel de Caron, it makes clear that James treated the banquet as something of a “coming out party” for the Netherlands Republic as a fully recognized member of the European community of sovereign states following the conclusion of a negotiated truce with Spain a few months earlier, and for Caron as an “absolute ambassador” rather than mere representative of towns and provinces seeking independence. Spain had resolutely refused to recognize Dutch sovereignty and the Spanish Ambassador pointedly refused to attend the banquet, sending his secretary to observe it instead. James used the occasion to convey his disapproval of Spain's posturing and pleasure at the success of the Dutch state, with which he was then cooperating in a dispute that threatened to escalate into war over the succession to the territory of Jülich-Cleves in the German Rhineland.

More generally, the character of any given performance and the size of the audience permitted to see it always depended in no small measure on where it took place. The most public theatrical events, with the largest and most heterogeneous audiences, transpired in the open air. These were also frequently the most costly. The wedding festivities for Princess Elizabeth in 1613, which included a mock naval battle between English and Turkish fleets on the Thames, and fireworks fashioned into moving images of warriors, ships, a monstrous serpent, and a fire-breathing whale,² were the most expensive public event of the seventeenth century at a cost approaching £100,000, roughly fifty times that of a typical masque (Smart and Wade 2013). Outdoor tournaments, royal entries into London and other large towns, and river pageants like those staged during the installment of Henry as Prince of Wales in 1610 also attracted crowds numbering in the thousands or tens of thousands. Outdoor progress entertainments advertised not only the monarch's splendor but the prestige of the host who organized and paid for them before local crowds that also sometimes numbered in the thousands. By contrast, indoor theatricals necessarily played to smaller audiences, ranging from perhaps 1,200 spectators at masques in the Banqueting House, to as few as a couple of dozen when Queen Henrietta Maria acted in a pastoral play within her privy chamber. Admission to a masque – and even more to a “private” performance of a pastoral – was therefore itself a sign of prestige.

Times and Occasions

It also mattered when a theatrical event took place and how it was connected to surrounding social, political, and ceremonial contexts. The Court was most crowded during the Christmas season in late December and January, which was also the peak season for theatrical performances and masques. Since medieval times, Christmas festivities had often involved rituals of social inversion, like the antics of lords of misrule: as the second Earl of Essex remarked, at Christmas “disorder is not only allowed but, in a manner, warranted” (Spedding, Ellis, and Heath 1857–74, vol. 9). The first Tudor masque took place on Twelfth Night 1512, when Henry VIII and several attendants invaded a Court ball wearing disguises, intended to frighten the ladies present (Chambers 1923). This emphasis on disguise and disordered merrymaking survived into the Stuart period in the satiric antimasques of Ben Jonson, which in addition to frequently bizarre costumes featured antic dances. A dance of hags in Jonson’s *Masque of Queens*, for example, “exploded in different gestures, such as baring the legs, untying the hair, beating the ground with snakes, or wounding one’s arm with a rusty knife,” accompanied by cries of “Hoo, Har, Har, Hoo” (Ravelhofer 2006, 191). Indeed, it has recently been argued that the antimasque was promoted by James I as a device for integrating professional dancers and their energetic movements into Court productions (Daye 2013). Social conventions demanded that the movements of courtiers who performed the main masque must remain dignified and restrained even while they danced, but these restrictions did not apply to antimasques performed by professionals that allowed for greater experimentation and the introduction of new dance forms from the Continent. By banishing the antimasque through his miraculous power to transform vices into virtue, the King seemed to overcome the anarchic spirit of Christmas itself and reestablish social order. At least in theory. A Venetian spectator who saw *The Masque of Blackness* reported that the entertainment ended “with a banquet in the Great Chamber, which was so furiously assaulted that down went the table and tresses before one bit was touched” (Nichols 1828, 1: 473). Even within the Court, disorder was not always contained.

A somewhat different set of theatrical forms developed around military exercises that displayed the prowess of the monarch, courtiers, and sometimes more ordinary subjects in the case of entertainments in London and other cities featuring mock battles (McGee 2009). The most important of these exercises, before their gradual discontinuance in the Stuart period, were Court jousts and tournaments (Young 1987).³ In the late Middle Ages a practice developed of beginning tournaments with disguisings, in which knights wearing fanciful costumes enacted stories patterned after chivalric romances, leading up to challenges to combat. Early disguisings took place on large mobile stages, like one constructed for a tournament in 1511 that measured twenty-six by sixteen feet and contained artificial trees, birds, beasts, a forester, and a castle inhabited by a maiden (Young 1987, 53–5). In England wheeled stages fell into disuse after the early 1520s, but disguisings and similar entertainments employing fixed scenery and mechanical props remained popular into the early seventeenth century: *Prince Henry’s Barriers* (1610) is the last important example.

Jousts provided opportunities for young princes, such as Henry VIII before about 1525, Edward VI, and Prince Henry, to display their athleticism and martial skills; but they were also associated with traditions of courtly love and service to ladies, which made them suitable for royal weddings and courtships, and as vehicles for expressions of devotion to Elizabeth I. In the late 1570s a tradition developed of honoring the anniversary of her accession to the throne on November 17 with jousts performed in an outdoor arena adjacent to the Court, capable of seating

several thousand spectators (Yates 1975; Strong 1977). Before jousting, each participant approached the Queen wearing a fanciful costume, delivered a speech, and presented her with an impresa or wooden shield bearing a symbolic picture and motto. By the end of the reign some jousts were retaining expert help to devise their speeches and impresas. The Earl of Essex employed Francis Bacon and other scholars to create a skit for a joust in 1595; Robert Cecil asked Sir John Davies to write his speech for a joust in 1601, and the Earl of Rutland paid Shakespeare 44s. to devise his impresa for a Jacobean Court joust (Hammer 1998; Young 1987, 123–43). Elizabethan jousts thereby gave rise to theatrical roles and conceits that might be carried over into other occasions or referred to in literary texts such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

If jousts provided opportunities for peers and gentlemen to engage in theatrical displays of loyalty to the monarch, the royal entries through London that traditionally occurred on the day before a coronation provided a comparable opportunity for the City and its guilds. A royal entry was a spectacular event, in which the monarch rode beneath a costly canopy, escorted by the entire Court as well as the nobles and bishops of the realm, along a prescribed route from the Tower of London to the Palace of Westminster. The members of London's guilds or livery companies donned ceremonial robes and lined one side of the route, while large crowds watched from the other, loudly cheering the monarch as he or she passed by (Manley 1995, 217–58; Smuts 1989; 2007, 220). From an early date London guilds and resident communities of foreign merchants began producing pageants to accompany the entry, emphasizing moral and religious virtues associated with good rule. The whole ceremony had strong religious overtones emphasizing the sacral nature of kingship, with marked similarities to Corpus Christi Day processions and celebrations of the Feast of the Epiphany. In one medieval entry a mechanical angel descended from an elevated platform to bless the King as he passed by (Kipling 1997). During Elizabeth's entry in 1559, traditional Catholic liturgical symbols were replaced by pageants featuring the Old Testament heroine Deborah and a book representing the Bible that the Queen kissed (Mulcaster 1559). For James's entry, postponed until March 1604 because of a plague at the time of his coronation, the playwrights Thomas Dekker and Ben Jonson devised seven pageants, staged before neoclassical triumphal arches (Smuts 2007, 223). Charles I postponed and then canceled his coronation entry but the tradition resumed at the Restoration. Royal visits to provincial towns also sometimes gave rise to street pageants.

As the weather turned warm in late spring and summer, kings and queens would often depart with a reduced but still substantial court on progresses through the countryside during which they would visit the residences of peers and gentry along their routes (Cole 1999; 2007). Elizabeth's progresses during the 1570s and 1590s were especially notable. Thereafter royal progresses may have declined, although historians disagree on this subject. It is clear, however, that the journeys of James I and Charles I to Scotland, for their coronations in Edinburgh in 1617 and 1633, were both extremely lavish and that the Earl of Newcastle may have broken all records for expense entertaining the King at his seats of Welbeck and Bolsover on the latter occasion. The monarch's arrival at a country house or in a provincial town would automatically trigger rituals of welcome, gift-giving and hospitality, around which theatrical entertainments developed. These sometimes extended over several days and took place at different locations in a town or country estate.

Progress entertainments allowed hosts to deliver pleas to the monarch in oblique and often playful ways, sometimes hinting at things no one dared express openly. In 1578, during a period of increasing tension with Spain, Elizabeth initiated negotiations for a possible marriage with Francis Duke of Anjou, brother to the French King Henry III. This courtship offered the Queen

her last realistic opportunity to marry and have children, along with the seeming prospect of a protective alliance. But the prospect of her marriage to a French Catholic prince, whose family had presided over the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of French Protestants only six years before, alarmed many English Protestants, including members of the Privy Council. Elizabeth's relations with Anjou quickly became a touchy subject, as she forbade public discussion of the matter and courtiers hesitated to incur her displeasure and the hostility of a possible future king consort of England by tactlessly direct remarks. In the late summer of 1578 Elizabeth departed, with Anjou's representatives among her entourage, on a progress through the strategically vulnerable region of East Anglia, in which both Puritans and Catholic recusants were unusually numerous. Leading Protestants on the Council seem to have arranged to use the progress to demonstrate the Queen's impatience with Catholic nonconformity, through the discovery and burning of a statue of the Virgin Mary at one estate she visited and by calling other recusant gentlemen to account as the Court passed through their neighborhood (Collinson 2007). As she visited Norwich, Elizabeth witnessed an entertainment in which Dame Chastity and her ladies overcame Venus and Cupid, affirming the superiority of virginity over erotic love. It ended with the appropriation of Cupid's arrows and their presentation to the Queen as a sign of her absolute command over the hearts of her subjects.

Other pageants at Norwich suggested suspicion of false friends. Although Anjou was never mentioned, the implied message, as Susan Doran (1995) has persuasively argued, was clear: Elizabeth had no need of a French husband but should rely instead on her subjects' loyalty. The following year, as controversy over the match intensified, Thomas Churchyard published an account of the East Anglian progress and Norwich entertainments (Smuts 2000). It did not violate the Queen's prohibition because it said nothing explicitly about her suitor but it would not have taken much imagination to decipher the intended message. Although no direct evidence has been uncovered that anyone at Court encouraged Churchyard's publication, it arouses suspicion that both he and his printer had close links to Elizabeth's favorite Sir Christopher Hatton, a leading opponent of the match.

Many progress entertainments incorporated the topography of an estate or town and elements of local folklore into their fabric. In 1575 Elizabeth visited the Earl of Leicester's great residence at Kenilworth, a magnificent castle previously possessed by Edward I and John of Gaunt, which Leicester had recently enlarged with a new wing built in a style meant to evoke medieval architecture (Morris 2009). Kenilworth's history and its location on an island surrounded by a mere made it an apt symbol for the realm and its feudal past. The Earl's pageant writers took advantage of these associations by devising entertainments based on Arthurian motifs, staged with the castle as a backdrop. Since Arthur was famously associated with chivalric heroism, as well as legends of an ancient English empire, these events hinted at Leicester's military ambitions, in the Netherlands and perhaps also Ireland. Additional entertainments staged inside the castle employed a different Ovidian imagery to evoke the erotically charged special relationship between Elizabeth and her favorite (Ellis 2013). This message may have been further reinforced by paired portraits hanging within the castle of the Earl and the Queen that Leicester had recently commissioned (Goldring 2007). Progress entertainments had their own "poetics of space," which is not always easy to decipher, because it often depended on buildings and topographical features that have since disappeared. But painstaking research has begun to retrieve some of these associative patterns.

In 1592 Lady Elizabeth Russell used a progress entertainment she may have written herself as part of a successful campaign to persuade the Queen to appoint her two teenage daughters as

ladies of the bedchamber (Davidson and Stevenson 2007). The previous year the Catholic magnate Anthony Browne Viscount Montague had hosted Elizabeth during a royal progress through Sussex. Despite his religion Montague claimed to be a loyal subject willing to fight for the Queen against any foreign invader; on this occasion she chose to take him at his word, despite her knowledge that he harbored many other Catholics in his house, including some suspected of involvement in conspiracies against her government. Montague devised an entertainment advertising his leadership of the local gentry community, during which a pilgrim appealed to the Queen to protect him against an overzealous ruffian and a persecuting lady named Peace, who were unable to distinguish his innocent intentions from those of an enemy. A fisherman meant to represent a priest then warned Elizabeth to beware of dishonest anglers who tried to lure fish with "bait," a reference to Protestants who attempted to ensnare Catholics with false accusations (Heale 2007). These examples suggest the range of social, political and religious messages that progress entertainments conveyed.

Texts and Interpretations

Interpretations of all these theatrical events, whether performed at Court or on progresses, must necessarily begin with the evidence furnished by printed texts, manuscripts, and occasionally visual sources or archaeological remains. Unfortunately these sources rarely tell us everything we would like to know. Many Court entertainments have left few or no traces behind, and even for the best documented our knowledge of performance details remains seriously incomplete. A complete reconstruction of the choreography of Court entertainments remains impossible, for example, because the English did not employ a system for recording dance movements until the early eighteenth century (Ravelhofer 2006). This makes it inevitable that we will at times overlook or misconstrue the full meaning of a theatrical performance.

Nearly all studies of Court entertainments before the 1980s relied on contemporary printed texts, sometimes but not always supplemented by other sources, like Inigo Jones's designs for masque costumes and scenes. The ready availability of this evidence had been increased by the prodigious work of the late eighteenth-century antiquarian and publisher John Nichols, who spent nearly four decades laboriously collecting, editing, and publishing every record he could find of Elizabethan and Jacobean progresses and masques in seven substantial volumes (Nichols 1823; 1828; Archer, Goldring, and Knight 2007; Pooley 2007). Republished in the twentieth century and available in most university libraries, Nichols' great compendiums can easily give the impression of providing an exhaustive documentary record. But in reality they do no such thing: he missed a number of manuscript sources and the texts he uncovered cannot be regarded as fully objective records.

More recent scholarship has shown an increasing awareness of the need to distinguish between theatrical performances and theatrical texts (e.g. Limon 1990). These texts may possess considerable historical and literary importance in their own right. Many circulated widely, allowing for additional imagined performances in the minds of readers, and they provided specimens of verse and theatrical inventions for study and imitation. But they need to be approached as texts shaped by rhetorical conventions and the agendas of those who wrote or commissioned them, rather than straightforward reports of an actual event (e.g. Bergeron 2007). Studies of European entertainments have stressed the need to distinguish among different kinds of theatrical texts, ranging from crude news pamphlets, hastily compiled and cheaply printed to

satisfy curious readers, to elaborate folio editions with engraved illustrations and copious annotations explaining the classical sources behind an entertainment's inventions (Canova-Green, Andrews, with France-Wagner 2013). In addition to printed texts, manuscript records also survive for a large number of entertainments, in England as on the Continent. Ten printed texts of progress entertainments survive and we know of three more that have apparently disappeared. By contrast, records of a further twenty-two entertainments survive in manuscript, often in multiple copies indicating that they once circulated relatively widely. Whereas the printed texts clustered in the 1570s and the years 1590–2, manuscript texts became the norm in the last years of Elizabeth's reign (Heaton 2007). Brief summary reports of a Court performance were even more common, while in some cases a fragment of a masque, such as a single song or speech, circulated independently (Knowles 2006).

Attention to the nature of these theatrical texts can provide important evidence about the political and literary culture of the period. It is significant, for example, that deluxe illustrated editions of Court entertainments appeared in England only at the Restoration, with the exception of Stephen Harrison's *Arches of Triumph* (1604), showing the arches erected for James I's entry into London in 1604. Internal evidence suggests that Harrison himself compiled this book and arranged for its printing and sale, at the urging of London dignitaries involved in planning the City's pageants (Smuts 2007, 219). It was therefore a civic rather than a Court project. It is not clear whether the Stuart Court encouraged the publication of texts of its masques, but these were, in any case, relatively inexpensive unillustrated quartos. In this respect England resembled Spain but lagged behind France, Italy, and the Netherlands, where illustrated texts of Court entertainments and civic pageants appeared earlier and were more common. An engraved record of the Earl of Leicester's entry into The Hague as Governor General of the Netherlands in 1586 survives, but no such record exists for the Kenilworth entertainment, or for any of Elizabeth's progresses or public appearances in London or other towns. Beautiful engravings were published of festivities in Heidelberg related to the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine Friedrich V (Smart and Wade 2013), but not for the even more elaborate celebrations of their marriage in London. The earliest printed image of a royal procession during an English royal entry, as well as the first engraving of a fireworks display along the Thames, were both executed to commemorate the visit of a French queen mother, Marie de Medici, to England in 1639 and incorporated within a folio text by a French panegyrist. The relatively underdeveloped state of English engraving partly explains the dearth of printed visual records but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the English Court remained less interested than some of its European counterparts and the Dutch Republic in disseminating records of its theatrical culture through printed images and expensive commemorative volumes.

Virtually all the printed records of English Court masques and entertainments consisted instead of relatively short and inexpensive pamphlets. It appears significant that the majority of these during the first half of Elizabeth's reign described performances that had some relation to the controversial issues of the Queen's marriage or provisions for the succession (Axton 1977; Doran 1995; James and Walker 1995). Accounts of the Kenilworth entertainment and the Norwich pageants of 1578 are examples, as is Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc*, the first blank-verse tragedy in English, and the tournament disguising *The Four Foster Children of Desire*, which obliquely proclaimed Elizabeth's final rejection of Anjou's suit. In at least some cases the printed records of these entertainments seem to have left out details that were too sensitive to divulge through such a public medium. One spectator described a dumb show between acts during the staging of *Gorboduc* hinting that "it was better for the Queen to marry

L. R. [Lord Robert, soon to become Earl of Leicester] than with the King of Sweden,” a leading suitor at the time (Jones and White 1996). There are suggestions that in the 1560s Leicester tried to exploit other theatrical events that were never recorded in print, in a campaign to persuade Elizabeth to marry him. But printed texts do not document these efforts.

The Queen’s marriage and provisions for the succession were subjects on which Elizabeth and her Privy Council frequently disagreed. We should therefore probably see these texts less as vehicles for a royal cult propagated by the government than as evidence of ways in which disputes within the ruling group spilled over into wider public arenas, whether because readers were interested in issues that affected the nation as well as its ruler, or because someone in Elizabeth’s inner circle decided to arrange a publication that served his own political agenda. At the very least we need to ask why records of some Court entertainments circulated in print or manuscript while others did not, without assuming that the agency always came from the Crown.

In some cases political motives may have been less important than the desire of a printer to capitalize on demands for specimens of Court literature or the determination of a masque writer like Ben Jonson to publicize his work through a carefully prepared edition. The period saw a gradual movement away from entertainments written by amateurs toward the use of professional writers. George Gascoigne, who wrote much of the Kenilworth entertainment, and Thomas Churchyard, a prominent publisher, were early pioneers in this respect. We owe the survival of the earliest printed record of an Elizabethan progress entertainment, at Bristol in the early 1570s, to the fact that Churchyard included it in a miscellany of his writings printed in 1575 (Churchyard 1575). In the 1580s John Lyly wrote several comedies for performance at Court that quickly found their way into print, while in the Stuart period published texts of masques not only of Jonson but Thomas Dekker, George Chapman, and Thomas Campion appeared routinely after their performance, for sale in stationers’ shops near the Court. This indicates the development of a market for such works, probably largely among gentry who resorted to London for the winter season and others who wished to keep up on Court news.

The large number of published texts of Court masques by professional writers in the seventeenth century and relative paucity of texts of progress entertainments leaves the impression that Court theater was increasingly focused on Whitehall and the Christmas season. How far this was actually the case, rather than being an illusion created by a lower survival rate for evidence of provincial entertainments, remains somewhat unclear. In August 1634 the Florentine ambassador reported that the King and Queen were on progress enjoying “great banquets [*festini*] that the nobility have prepared in the provinces through which they pass.”⁴ This may or may not be a report of Caroline progress entertainments; since no records of these *festini* have so far been traced, it remains difficult to be sure.

Conclusions

Since the work of scholars like Frances Yates, Roy Strong, and Stephen Orgel in the 1960s and 1970s, studies of Court theatrical events have been at the forefront of interdisciplinary efforts to connect literary analysis to political history, as well as histories of art, material culture, music, dance, and ritual. Changes in interpretations of masques and progress entertainments broadly correspond to wider shifts in scholars’ understanding of early modern politics and political culture. Fifty years ago, historians still generalized broadly about “the rise of absolutism”

throughout Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, while New Historicist scholars were fascinated with a fairly monolithic model of the “circulation of power” through cultural forms. These paradigms led to an emphasis on the construction of royal cults through theater, art, literature, and ceremony, and the expression of ideologies of uncontested royal control (e.g. Strong 1977). Since the 1980s, historical research has demonstrated that even the strongest kings of the period needed to negotiate power, especially with noble elites, both in the provinces and at the political center, within their own courts. Cultural historians and literary scholars have developed considerably more complex and subtle ways of interpreting the many different ways in which texts and performances can intervene in social and political relationships, while new archival research and work in fields including dance history, the history of the book, and the history of manuscript publication have also contributed fresh insights. More than ever, studies of masques and other Court entertainments require a variety of interdisciplinary tools and an ability to combine close textual analysis with careful attention to multilayered historical contexts. They remain a challenging but vibrant area of research.

NOTES

- 1 British Library Add MS 17677 G, fols. 375v–86.
- 2 British Library Royal MS 17.C.XXXV provides color images.
- 3 A tournament involved combat between groups of knights, whereas a joust featured single combat between two mounted knights, often separated by a barrier. There were combats on foot with swords or occasionally pikes.
- 4 British Library Add MS 27962f., fol. 124.

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“What revels are in hand?” Performances in the Great Households

Suzanne Westfall

Until recently, theater historians barely mentioned early modern household theater, but the fact that this chapter exists indicates that we are finally recognizing the importance of these venues in our new historical studies of the period, and making our previously implicit assumptions more explicit. During the past ten years, patronage studies have attracted increased scholarly attention, mostly devoted to textual matters rather than the more ephemeral performance studies. Feminist scholars have also focused increasingly on the roles that women played as patrons and performers, chiefly at the royal courts, which significantly enlarges our understanding of great household performances. Our chief sources for information about household patronage continue to be the volumes of Records of Early English Drama (REED) and the *Patrons and Performances* website (REED 2016), both of which publish private household accounts that indicate rich traditions of music, theater, ceremony, and dance within the context of private and public family life.

At royal courts, at rural innyards, at New Year's concerts in the Earl of Northumberland's castle, at Cardinal Wolsey's great hall, at a royal banqueting house for Queen Anne, retainers and administrators presented performances to the members of their households and to the public at large. Since we have been indirectly discussing this topic for some time, a slight shift of the focus will foreground auspices and patronage, and restore the households to their rightful places as primary producers, and indeed interregnum preservers, of early modern theater. The REED publications, which have included financial records of aristocratic households since 1986, have certainly illuminated our study of household and patron theater, and have demonstrated clearly that performances sponsored by the aristocracy continued to thrive and indeed to increase throughout the years when public theaters were flourishing in the city and after they had been forbidden, a fact that disputes the popular notion that the public stage replaced the private. Recent REED volumes dedicated to the Inns of Court (2010) and the Civic London collection (2015) indicate that the structures, purposes, and styles of private aristocratic household drama were echoed in

sponsored public, ecclesiastical, and school dramas; in a sense it is the London public stage, to which we have paid such extensive attention for centuries, that is the exception to the theatrical rule. Multimedial performances, sponsored by families, universities, abbeys, and civic institutions, produced for specific occasions, offered free of cost to audiences, were just as frequent and influential, and far more widely spread geographically, than the repertoires of the public London stages.

This chapter will begin by exploring the nature of the great household as a political and economic unit, then provide several examples of the entertainments we might expect the great households to produce. Ultimately, of course, the issue of patronage informs the entire study – household theater is, after all, patron theater. Looking at early modern theater from the perspective of patronage and households allows us to reevaluate the meaning and purpose of theater, to understand better the power structures and hierarchies of early modern England, and to reassess noblemen's and especially noblewomen's roles in creating Renaissance theater.

Entertainments in great households were almost always occasional, multimedial, frequently nontextual, and ephemeral, as Ben Jonson himself acknowledges at the end of the *Masque of Blackness* ([1605] 1999, 367), which “had that success in the nobility of performance as nothing needs to the illustration but the memory by whom it was personated.” Since we have very few visual representations, musical scores, or first-hand descriptions for entertainment outside the royal courts, we recover performances only with great difficulty and with creative research in financial accounts. In addition, many performances at the great households have not been considered theater at all, although they are, of course, theatrical. Tournaments, disguisings, ceremonialia – until recently, all these forms have seemed trivial in comparison to extant playscripts, and are difficult to assess by scholars who hold highly rhetorical concepts of drama, since these entertainments rarely survive in published form. Discussion of household theater, therefore, requires interdisciplinary approaches, since it engenders a profusion of other issues, from the influence of patronage (ideology, religion, touring), to the aesthetics of nonverbal performance (jousts, disguisings, masques, cookery, heraldry, ceremony), to architectonics (great halls, chapels, outdoors, domestic vs. public space), to gender politics (female patronage, authorship, performance).

Household books of ordinances do give us some idea of the structures of occasional theater and the household staff who were expected to provide it. Edward IV's *Black Book* is an early and particularly valuable record of household management for resident and nonresident performers. *The Second Northumberland Household Book* (c.1519–27), ordinances for Henry Algernon Percy, fifth Earl of Northumberland (1478–1527), gives detailed instructions about many aspects of family ceremonial occasions. Household account books for the royal and aristocratic establishments are a particularly rich and dependable source of information, since following the money is as essential in the sixteenth century as it is in the twenty-first, as we learn from Philip Henslowe's *Diary*. These accounts preserve such significant evidence as costs for costuming and sets; dates, refreshments, and rewards to visiting entertainers, as well as records of their patrons; perquisites for retained household entertainers; salaries for teachers of dance and music; purchases of musical instruments, books, and music; and sometimes details of occasions, audiences, or performance. Partial household accounts from many of the gentry and aristocrats have been printed in the REED volumes of each shire; extensive accounts of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, survive (Gage 1834), as does an earlier household book (1311–12) for Queen Isabella (Blackley and Hermansen 1971). Perhaps the most important collection is Albert Feuillerat's *Documents Relating to the Revels at Court in the Time of King Edward VI and Queen Mary* (*The Loseley Manuscripts*), which

records in superb detail the expenditures for Tudor royal household performances. So, although we may not have playscripts, we do have a few stage managers' "bibles" and business managers' account books to guide us, to confirm that household theater was not improvisational but rather meticulously planned and precisely stage-managed.

A great household, whether ecclesiastical or aristocratic, was neither a place *per se*, nor a specific architectural structure. Rather, these "sites" of culture were collections of people assembled to serve a patron in the maintenance of person and property. So the early modern bishops and archbishops, noblemen and noblewomen (for many women kept their own courts within the household auspices of husbands, brothers, and fathers) formed an epicenter for a semi-itinerant company of family, bureaucrats, officers, and servants. Static and mobile, private and public, domestic and commercial, the superstructure of servitors and household "stuff" moved from property to property, from manor to castle to London townhouse. As such, the household constituted an economic unit to manage the patron's estate; a political unit to serve as an expression of power and to provide links between and among the patronage networks; and a social unit to supply the trappings of culture that would indicate the aesthetic and intellectual sophistication of the patron. As Machiavelli observed, an aristocrat ought to "neglect no circumstance of sumptuous display," but rather "should show himself a patron of merit" who will "entertain the people with festivals and shows . . . offering an example of courtesy and munificence" ([1532] 1992, 41, 61).

The numbers in a household could range from the small group of servitors for a country knight, to two hundred and fifty or more for Edward Stafford, third Duke of Buckingham, eighty-six of whom formed the household of his Duchess, Eleanor Percy; royal households could be, of course, much larger, and encompass several subhouseholds. For example, nine-year old (and doubtless beardless) Edward VI retained his own barber, and as a toddler danced to the music of his own minstrels, provided by his father, Henry VIII, whose chamberlain also administered households for the Queen (whoever she might have been at the time) and the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth. These servants expected to be given food, livery, lodging, entertainment, and sometimes protection at the expense of the patron.¹ Small wonder that provincial families panicked when the royal household was headed their way, expecting the country hosts to foot the bill for the support of two entire households – their own and the traveling monarch's. In fact, when Edward VI was on the verge of bankruptcy, he headed for the shires in an extended progress, a stratagem practiced frequently by the frugal Queen Elizabeth, who seems to have mastered the art of getting other people to pay for her entertainment.

Although the geographical space of the household was changeable, the duties and privileges of the personnel are rigidly prescribed by household regulations. While resident in the household, a retained performer could expect a salary, gratuities from the patron and his friends, lodging (and perhaps employment and lodging for family members while the performer was touring), meals, candles, fuel, and a suit of livery once a year. One actor even expected burial costs from the Countess of Pembroke (McMillin and MacLean 1999, 29). Successful households were economically practical, so often resident entertainers served in more than one occupational capacity. For example, in 1311 Richard Pilke and his wife Elena were retained by the royal court as both minstrels and pastry chefs; much later the Duke of Rutland provided Anthony Hall with board for four weeks because he was "lernyng a play to pley in Christemes" and "scowryng away the yerthe and stones in the tennys playe." Many have noted Richard Gibson's metamorphosis from player to yeoman of the wardrobe, or John English's as Henry VII's interluder and tailor (Westfall 1990, 126–7).

Edward IV's *Black Book* furnishes us with a detailed job description for heraldic trumpeters, directing them to provide: "blowinges and pipinges, to such offices as must be warned to prepare for the king and his houshold at metes and soupers, to be the more redy in all seruyces, and all thies sitting in the hall togyder, whereof sume vse trumpettes, sume shalmuse and small pipes" (qtd. in Myers 1959, 131). The King also warned his minstrels not to "be too presumptuose nor to familer to aske any rewardes of the lordes of his land"; further orders are given that some minstrels come to Court only at the "v festes of the yere," to take "iiij ob. a day," and to "auoyude the next day after the festes be don" (1959, 132), showing that the household was not inclined to support all its entertainers on a full-time basis. So here we have an institutional reason for many of those touring minstrel troupes we find in civic and household financial accounts.

Performances were, however, required on specific occasions. Northumberland's chapel, for example, was directed to perform the Nativity play on Christmas morning, the Resurrection play on Easter morning, and an unspecified play in the great hall on Shrove Tuesday. Records of precisely what these entertainers performed do not survive, but it seems plausible to assume that the Christmas and Easter plays resembled the appropriate episodes of the cycle plays, while the Shrovetide play could offer more secular treats. Northumberland's almoner was a "maker of interludes," and his chaplain apparently assisted in the writing of the Beverley passion plays, so it is not difficult to imagine aesthetic exchanges between civic and household producers (Lancashire 1980, 7–45, 13n). As I have argued elsewhere (Westfall 1990), *The Second Shepherds' Play*, with its complex musical requirements, seasonal allusions, and explicit references to chapel functions, seems a particularly good candidate for such household production. Indeed, virtually every known playwright (and probably most of those "anons") occupied some position in one or more patronage network, so that to some extent we know that the great household patrons were fundamental to Renaissance public theater.

Even though the great household was not always situated in a specific geographical place, various manors and castles provided platea and loci for performance. In actuality, any empty space, from Queen Katherine's bedchamber to King Henry VIII's tents at the Field of Cloth of Gold in France, to the Thames River for Edward VI's water tournaments, could and did become stages. In 1591, the Earl of Hertford even reconstructed a few acres of his landscape at Elvetham in Hampshire to provide a four-day entertainment for Queen Elizabeth, including a crescent-shaped lake with three islands, a ship, sea creatures, and verses that Shakespeare may have recalled when he wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.² Clearly, early modern patrons were not as limited in their conception of "appropriate" theater space as today's audiences are; rather, early modern aristocrats conducted their lives with a complex understanding of "public privacy."

Household revels also often blur the distinction between communal and personal space, actor and audience, public and private experience, liturgical and secular activities. Henry Medwall's interlude *Fulgens and Lucre*s (Nelson 1980) actually depends upon such ambiguities for its initial jest, and makes an astute political comment on fashion at the same time:

- A. I trowe your owyn selfe be oon
Of them that shall play.
- B. Nay, I am none.
I trowe thou spekyst in derision
To lyke me thereto.

- A. Nay, I mok not, wot ye well
 For I thought verely by your apparell
 That ye had bene a player.
- B. Nay, never a dell.
- A. Than I cry you mercy
 I was to blame. Lo, therefore, I say
 Ther is so myche nyce aray
 Amonges these galandis now aday
 That a man shall not lightly
 Know a player from another man.

(ll. 44–56)

In one of the most popular household entertainments, the disguising or masque, performers and spectators mingled more unambiguously. Henry VIII, who was extremely fond of fancy dress, once burst into Queen Katherine's bedchamber dressed as Robin Hood to perform for the Spanish ambassadors (E. Hall 1809, 723–4). On many other occasions, Edward Hall records that the King broke both social and theatrical "fourth wall" conventions to choose dancing partners from among the spectators, an innovation that first caused alarm, then quickly became quite popular, as the later extravagant masques of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones demonstrate.

Various household spaces were also natural settings for theater. Chapel choirs and lofts as well as the great halls where banquets took place (thus prompting some scholars to interpret the Latin term *interlude* as entertainments *between* courses) were frequent sites for theatrical activities. John Astington (1999) shows that platform stages constructed for specific events were intricate, often trompe l'oeil and equipped with innovative mechanical devices that did not invariably use the screens or the full expanse of the hall, as Richard Southern (1973) had assumed. The reusable stages at Cambridge, as Alan Nelson (1994) has demonstrated, were complex and sophisticated; Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean (1999) have beautifully photographed a variety of spaces that indicate the diversity and adaptability of household space.

At family occasions or royal progresses, entire properties became theater space: ceremonial processions wound through the house; divine service or liturgical plays occupied the chapel; banquets, concerts, and entertainments filled the great hall. Tournaments, often highly allegorical, were staged with elaborate sets by the royal household, which could afford the economic and political expense of mock battle, but some notable exceptions to the royal venue for jousts occur among the upper, most trusted nobility.³ Hunting, al fresco banqueting, and dancing erupted into the parks and meadows outdoors. Great household performances, like the great cycles and psychomachia, were "environmental" and site-specific theater.

The most ubiquitous troupes in the great households were the musicians without which no respectable household could function, or so it appears from period household accounts. Heraldic minstrels were indispensable for martial and ceremonial occasions, and the nobility almost always traveled with trumpets and drums. In addition, most families employed soloists, frequently players on harp, psaltery, lute, organ, or virginals; richer families also retained "mixed consorts," usually comprising rebec, lute, tabor, viols, and fiddles. These musicians had a variety of responsibilities, including preserving family history; carrying messages (or perhaps spying?), providing music for dancing and singing, repairing instruments, and teaching music to family members who frequently purchased songbooks.

Music was also provided by resident chapel clergy and children of the chapel, literate musicians in both English and Latin, who were responsible primarily for religious service, but also performed as a theatrical company. In great household disguisings, such as those for the wedding of Prince Arthur and Princess Katherine, and later in the elaborate masques of Jonson and Jones, chapel children and gentlemen (most likely along with household actors) must have taken the singing and speaking roles. Noblemen and noblewomen could be expected to dress in elaborate costumes and to dance, but would probably not have memorized lengthy speeches or sung tenor, treble, or harmony. Households who did not retain resident chapels could import boy companies, as when Edward Seymour, Lord Protector, hired Paul's boys for New Year's Day; Sir William Petre did the same for his daughter's wedding in 1560 (Emmison 1964; Jackson 1875, 174). Chaplains, almoners, and chapel gentlemen, such as John Redford, John Heywood, Nicholas Udall, and William Hunnis, were also known as playwrights.

We know from financial accounts (not to mention Hamlet's famous complaint) that these choristers were popular actors on the public and private stages and frequent performers in plays and disguisings at royal and aristocratic courts. Chapel involvement seems required, in fact, for many interludes from the mid-fifteenth to the midsixteenth centuries, including *Wisdom, Youth, Fulgens and Lucretia*, *Godly Queen Hester*, *Wit and Science*, *Roister Doister*, *Respublica*, and *Jacob and Esau*. Most of these plays are polemical, arguing specific political or religious agendas (another luxury of great household performance); they require large casts that cannot be doubled, and specify music and dance, ingredients specific to chapel productions.

What sorts of entertainments would we expect to find in the great households? The program is as varied as the personalities that produced it. Northumberland's *Household Book* requires the services of actors, singers, dancing henchmen, and musicians in the ordinances for spectacular occasions such as family weddings and for Twelfth Night, when the household enjoyed hierarchical processions, a banquet, a masque, a morris dance, and a concert by the gentlemen of the chapel. Many household accounts note the popularity of novelty entertainers such as Court fools (like Queen Mary's fool Jane, who had her head shaved) and animal trainers.⁴ The Court fool Bernard and fifty-four others danced naked before King Edward I, and odd references to such antics as "minstrelsy with snakes" and to the multitalented Roland le Fartere, who was rewarded for "making a leap, a whistle, and a fart" (Bullock-Davies 1978, 66–7; 1986, 108–9), show that human appetite for the coarse or exotic never changes. Dancing women, puppet shows, storytellers, water combats, and maypoles appear as frequently as "highbrow" banquets, disguisings, classical pageants, and Latin interludes. A payment to William Cornish for "paving gutters of lead for urinals" for a 1516 Greenwich joust (Streitberger 1994, 244–5, 249, 252, 263, 272 *passim*) both brings us down to earth and demonstrates the foresight of those charged with producing household performances.

Households also heard plays, of course. Certainly from 1580 onward we find at the royal court many of the same plays that we find on the London public stages, for, after all, the premier household in England is the Queen's, and her revels demand that the best troupes in the city perform before her. Naturally, I do not suggest that all plays were written specifically for households or patrons, but there was clearly a financial advantage in offering texts simultaneously to both private patrons and the general public. But before the 1570s, many of the interludes or moral plays do seem to have been commissioned by aristocratic patrons, performed within their households, and, if the production values of the text warranted, toured by their players.

Since the 1950s, many scholars have been working to attribute anonymous early Tudor play-texts to patrons and great household auspices. Alexandra Johnston (1986) makes a persuasive

case that *Wisdom* was commissioned by local nobility, perhaps by the Duke of Norfolk or the Duke of Suffolk, both of whom lived nearby.⁵ David Bevington's argument in *Tudor Drama and Politics* (1968) that drama was naturally polemical and that patrons either chose or commissioned works that would communicate their own ideologies has become an assumption for scholars studying patronage and player repertoires. T. W. Craik (1953) and Ian Lancashire (1976) have made strong cases for household auspices for *Temperance and Humility*, *Wealth and Health*, *The World and the Child*, *Youth*, and *Hick Scornor*. More recently, Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean (1999), in their detailed discussion of the repertory of one particular company, the Queen's Men, connect players to specific texts, showing that the Queen's Men (with the support of radical Protestants like Walsingham and Leicester) were engaged in promulgating ideological state apparatuses in discouraging simultaneously both recusancy and more extreme Puritanism, positions which also happened to be the ideological concerns of their patrons. Paul Whitfield White (1993) explores the relationship between John Bale and the household of Thomas Cromwell during the 1530s. Sir Richard Cholmeley's players were called before the Star Chamber for producing *King Lear*, *Pericles*, a seditious interlude, and a saint's play at the household of the recusant Sir John Yorke c.1609–10 (Takenaka 1999).⁶ The Simpson players, a Jacobean acting troupe from North Yorkshire consisting of fifteen recusant Catholic shoemakers led by Robert and Christopher Simpson, toured four plays around northern households, including *St. Christopher*, *The Three Shirleys*, and *Pericles* (Keenan 2013).

Sidney Anglo's *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (1969) describes in detail the Court entertainments of Henry VII, indicating the complexity, both in structure and in content, of royal household entertainments. While we do not have (or have not as yet unearthed) similarly detailed accounts of entertainments at provincial noble households, we can assume from the household account and ordinance books that the wealthier great households lavishly celebrated major religious and secular festivals; Henry VII actually fined the Earl of Northumberland for excessive displays (Brennan 1902, 1: 141, 168–9). Performances, because they tended to be occasional, could be made specific to social, liturgical, and political events and aimed at specific audiences, to “self-fashion” (to use Stephen Greenblatt's (1980) term) the aristocratic patron. Sets and costumes were supplied by wealthy households; retained entertainers encouraged collaboration in design and performance among various types of artists. Most important, household theater was nonprofit theater, at least in hard cash, which left the designers considerably freer to experiment and overproduce, since the patron absorbed the cost. These factors make private household drama quite different from the public stages.

Masques (or their earlier form called “disguising”) demonstrated production values and techniques that made them extremely popular at the great households. Masques were generally commissioned to celebrate a specific occasion by referring to particular events and people and by employing allegory complementary to the interests of the household. A play performed by a small troupe of interluders could never hope to be as extravagant a theatrical display as could a masque that involved a greater number and variety of performers. Chapel gentlemen and chapel children, singing and perhaps speaking, joined with minstrels and dancing gentlemen and gentlewomen on elaborate sets and scenic devices to create a visual and aural extravaganza that interluders could not match, as Sydney Anglo (1969), W. R. Streitberger (1994), Stephen Orgel (1967), and John Astington (1999) have all amply demonstrated in their work on the masque and disguising. Expensive masques, which were never intended for paying general admission audiences, could not be recreated for touring, could not return a profit or even meet expenses, so the household absorbed the entire expenditure. In addition, the masque involved household

guests in a fashion that a play could not. Some, such as Queen Anne and Prince Henry, participated themselves as disguisers in works commissioned from notable creators like Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones. The masque not only entertained but flattered the elite as well, complimenting their intellect with its often classical themes, and reflecting their own courtly lifestyle. The sole profit to the patron, the grandeur of the impression, made it a splendidly wasteful display.

Patron troupes also served aristocratic interests. By 1583, as McMillin and Maclean (1999) have shown, the Earls of Leicester, Sussex, Oxford, and Derby had retained all the most prominent actors in England, and contributed their best players to an amalgamated troupe under Elizabeth I's titular patronage. This "monopoly" (later to be replaced by the "duopoly" of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the Lord Admiral's Men) increased Privy Council control over public playing, thereby ensuring that the political and religious ideologies of the patrons were advanced, and, ironically, reducing both recusant themes and radical Protestant attacks. The actively touring Queen's Men once again functioned to affirm the importance of household theater even while the public theaters of London were at full strength; touring players were far more effective as spies, emissaries, and messengers, stopping at towns and other noble households all over the kingdom, rather than staying home in London.

Touring players have been a matter of record and a focus for early modern theater studies for the past century (see Peter H. Greenfield, Chapter 22 in this volume), so I will not belabor the issues here, except to reiterate that account books continually indicate the presence of actors not by their geographic origins or their names or their texts, but by the names of their patrons. For years theater historians ignored this fact, or perhaps assumed that patrons acted in name only, in spite of the fact that the law specified that patronage was essential to traveling players. As early as 1285, the Statute of Winchester addressed the problem of masterless vagabonds, and the statute was reactivated by royal proclamation in 1527, with a reminder in 1531. Years later Elizabeth I once again renewed the Act against Retainers and the Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds; such repeated legislation would surely indicate that players needed frequent reminding to attach themselves to a household or face punishment. The Crown also began issuing patents to control the patronized troupes and regulations to control seditious content in plays (*Statutes of the Realm*, 1963, 1: 97, 3: 328; Hughes and Larkin 1964, 1: 172).

In fact, recent studies make it clear that the patron–retainer relationship was quite complex. Andrew Gurr (1996) reconstructs the histories of almost twenty patron companies, noting their composition, repertoires, and touring details, which allows us to form a much sharper picture of the interactions we have long simply surmised. Richard Dutton's *Mastering the Revels* (1991) shows that the central government assumed that the nobility had some control over their entertainers, for potentially seditious materials were sometimes permitted to be performed within household auspices. Aristocratic patronage might also inspire higher wages and rewards on tours. In 1540–1 the city of Dover rewarded the troupe of their local patron, the Duke of Suffolk's players, with six shillings and eight pence, whereas more far-flung communities gave them only the typical twelve pence. The Earl of Northumberland's household book institutionalizes this practice, specifying that performers retained by a "speciall Lorde Frende or Kynsman" would receive higher rewards than others (Blackstone 1988; Dawson 1965, 39, 69; Grose et al. 1809, 253).

Focusing on households as producers of textual and nontextual entertainments also allows us to revise our view of women as creators and producers of theatrical art and to accord them new prominence. While we have long assumed that women were forbidden to perform on the English public stage, we also know that women were very active in private theater on the extremes of the

social hierarchy, from traveling entertainers and fools to noble dancers in masques and disguisings. In fact, recent scholarship suggests that many noblewomen, such as Margaret Cavendish and Aletheia Talbot, who performed as “amateurs” in the revels of Queen Anne of Denmark and Queen Henrietta Maria, began their writing careers in the furnace of household theater (Brown and Parolin 2008; Orgel 1996). Henrietta Maria went further than amateur status, as she had her women players trained by Joseph Taylor, a member at various times of the Chamberlain’s Men, the Kings Men, the Duke of York’s Men and Lady Elizabeth’s Men (McManus 2002, 15).

Many women also served as patrons, such as the Queen Mother, Margaret Beaufort, patron of the poet-playwright John Skelton during the reign of Henry VII, and Queen Anne, patron of Jones and Jonson to produce Stuart Court masques, many of which promoted a specific political agenda (Parolin 2005, 225). In fact, Greg Walker has stressed the importance of household theater to the Stuart monarchy, going so far as to assert that household dramas were “moves or stages in a complex negotiation for power” (1998, 250–2).

Can we perhaps contemplate Queen Anne’s, not just Ben Jonson’s, *Masque of Blackness*, when the Queen, desiring some exotic (and erotic?) fantasy, requested Jonson to compose a masque in which she and her ladies could appear “all paynted like Blackamores face and neck bare,” inspired perhaps by a spectacle of Africans dancing “naked in the snow in front of the royal carriage” at her own wedding (K. Hall 1991, 4)? Equally subversive was Mary, Queen of Scots cross-dressing for an after-dinner masque in the 1560s (McManus 2002, 69); male cross-dressing also occurred in the household performances of 1633, when Queen Henrietta Maria commissioned both Montagu’s *The Shepherd’s Paradise*, and a masque which took place on Shrove Tuesday (Ravelhofer 1999).

Many women, including seven queens, created household entertainments through their retained artists and playwrights. Many noblewomen performed. Even after the government closed the theaters in 1642, women continued to produce domestic theatricals in their salons, and began to focus on the complex political and social structure of the household itself as a rich topic for theater (Findlay 2009; Wall 2002). David Bergeron (1981) has identified, through dedications of dramatic texts, at least fourteen women who served as patrons. And in more indirect fashion, women in the audiences, both public and private, served as patrons, a situation satirized in quite controversial style in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Through control of the purse strings, women did indeed have a say in the theatrical art of their era. Denied acting roles in the public theater, women sang, played musical instruments, spoke text, and danced in disguisings and masques. Matilda Makejoy, one of the very few female minstrels on record, entertained the royal court with dances and acrobatics in the early fourteenth century. Aemilia Lanyer, feminist poet and, according to A. L. Rowse (1978) at least, Shakespeare’s “dark lady,” was a member of the recorder-playing Bassano family who served Henry VIII, receiving lucrative properties and monopolies in return (Lewalski 1991). Elizabethan playwrights saw actresses with the *commedia dell’arte* perform at her Court in 1578/9 (Orgel 1996, 7). Countless prologues and epilogues demonstrate that women, particularly queens, often provided the *raison d’être* for entertainments. John Lyly’s compliments to the chastity of Queen Elizabeth and the devotion of her courtiers in *Endymion*, and George Peele’s *The Araygnement of Paris* (in which the prize golden apple rolls to the Queen’s feet), demonstrate appeals to feminine influence.

Turning scholarly attention to private household performance has also led us to think in more complex ways about drama and private royalist performances during the Cromwellian era, a neglected topic that Dale Randall (1995) explores. Randall demonstrates clearly that theater

continued to be written and performed, often by women, in private households during the years that public performances were prohibited, and that such drama became increasingly polemical and political. In fact, during these years when English theater retreated to the privacy of the households, playwrights and audiences who would reemerge in the Restoration found refuge, training, and preservation for Tudor and Stuart theatrical techniques. In this respect, the private households, not the urban public theaters, provide the lifeline through the interregnum for early modern English theater.

For example, Margaret Cavendish, trained in writing and performing at the royal household, continued playing at Rutland House in the 1650s (Crawford 2005, 241) and composed so-called “closet plays” during the years of her exile on the Continent (Raber 1998). Her stepdaughters Jane and Elizabeth saw Ben Jonson’s plays at their households at Welbeck Abbey and Bolsover, and went on to script *The Concealed Fancies* which focused on the household as a “curious and ambiguous location” during the exile of their royalist father William, first Duke of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, about 1643–4 (Findlay 2002, 260). In the 1620s Lady Rachel Fane composed performances for her brother’s household at Apethorpe Hall (O’Connor 2006).

Extant plays, more familiar to the general reader than chronicles or financial account books, provide us with impressions, albeit in fictional form, of the ways in which great households administered performance. The most often-quoted example is Duke Theseus in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, who asks Philostrate, his master of the revels, “What masque? What music?” Theseus then selects a play, providing his rationale:

“The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.”
We’ll none of that. That have I told my love
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
“The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.”
That is an old device, and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.
“The thrice three Muses, mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.”
That is some satire keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
“A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisby; very tragical mirth.”

(5.1.44–57)

This literary analogue clarifies some of the principles of selection: patrons required fresh materials, preferably in praise of family members or histories, suitable to the occasion and uncritical of household policies.

Other Shakespearean plays also represent scenes of patron–player interaction. Hamlet is clearly delighted to welcome players to Elsinore, and greets them as old friends, suggesting that players, with their regular circuits, had friends and acquaintances all over the country. Besides debating aesthetics with Polonius, the Prince also compliments the player troupe’s adaptability, assuming that they can and will insert a patron’s emendations into their script. Prospero prepares the ubiquitous wedding masque for his daughter, as so many noble patrons actually did. Just as in the real world of courtly marriage, the masque on the fictional island employs classical goddesses,

learned allusions, and appropriate themes: Venus and Cupid, representatives of sexual love, are excluded in favor of Iris, Ceres, and Juno, representatives of home, hearth, and fertility. Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* also contains the requisite wedding masque for Don Vermandero's three-day wedding celebration, this one commenting ironically on the marriage; unlike the virtuous Miranda, who gets a harmonic masque of marriage blessing, Beatrice-Joanna ends up with a cacophonous masque of fools and madfolk from the local asylum.

The framing scenes from *The Taming of the Shrew*, almost always omitted from performance, show the interactions of a lord and his household in the elaborate joke on the drunken beggar:

Lord Sirrah, go see what trumpet 'tis that sounds.
Exit a Servingman
 Belike some noble gentleman that means
 Traveling some journey, to repose him here.
Enter Servingman
 How now, who is it?
Servingman An't please your honor, players
 That offer services to your lordship.
Enter Players
Lord Bid them come near. – Now, fellows, you are welcome.
Players We thank your honor.
Lord Do you intend to stay with me to-night?
First Player So please your lordship to accept our duty.
Lord With all my heart. This fellow I remember
 Since once he played a farmer's eldest son.
 'Twas where you wooed the gentlewoman so well.
 I have forgot your name, but sure that part
 Was aptly fitted and naturally performed

 Well, you are come to me in happy time
 The rather for I have some sport in hand
 Wherein your cunning can assist me much.

(Ind.73–91)

Again, we see the same sort of welcome and the same expectations that Shakespeare writes into other plays, drawn, no doubt, from his own days on the road. And perhaps the scene is so often omitted because it serves no plot function, but merely contextualizes the means of theatrical production – of little interest to modern audiences.

These analogues indicate that patrons may have actively chosen their *ludi* for specific reasons (taste? novelty? politics?) and did not scruple to interfere actively with performance details. To a certain extent, reality once again supports fiction, as a closer look at the household revels during the brief reign of the boy-king Edward VI indicates. Although Edward was well educated (multilingual, well read in history, philosophy, and divinity, skilled in sports, music, and dancing), his favorite entertainments nevertheless remained “boyish.” John Allen, yeoman of the prince's beasts, staged fights and bearbaitings once a month; revels accounts record frequent parades and masques of wild Irishmen. The King, like most boys, was fond of martial displays. At Shrovetide 1548, John Stow records a castle storming “to shew the King the manner of Warres wherein hee

had great pleasure,” and in June of 1550 Edward, Lord Clinton and the new Admiral of England staged a water tournament, which Edward enjoyed enough to describe in detail in his journal (qtd. in Gough 1857, 2: 279, 383; Stow 1631, 595; Anglo 1969, 300–1). Within the circumscribed structure of the lengthy coronation pageant, it seems Edward was already making a patron’s space for himself by stopping the procession to watch a tumbler walk a tightrope (Hume 1889; Gough 1857, 1: ccxc). At the coronation banquet, revels accounts note expenses for the sort of entertainment we should expect from the newly empowered Protestant household – an anticlerical and antipapal masque, in which Edward himself played a priest (Feuillerat [1914] 1963, 3–8). Extant plays from Edward’s reign also reflect his personality: *Jacob and Esau*, *Lusty Juventus*, and *Nice Wanton* all address matters specific to the reign of a boy-king reformer. Again we see that the patron’s tastes and ideologies affected the themes and aesthetics of the entertainments. The plays and entertainments certainly flattered the boy, self-centered no doubt by nature and nurture, using theater to reflect and refract policy, as did all the Tudor entertainments (Westfall 2001).

A study of household theater leads constantly to speculation about its function within the political system, and ultimately its value to the people who paid the pipers. Clifford Geertz, writing from the anthropological wing, puts it best:

At the political center of any complexly organized society ... there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth governing. No matter how democratically the members of the elite are chosen (usually not very) or how deeply divided among themselves they may be (usually much more than outsiders imagine), they justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities and appurtenances that they have either inherited or, in more revolutionary situations, invented. It is these – crowns and coronations, limousines and conferences – that mark the center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built. (1983, 124)

Clearly, great household performances are exactly the “set of symbolic forms” that express the political power of the patrons. Rather than one unified ideological state apparatus, we find many – sometimes competing and conflicting. In spite of repeated attempts by the city and Crown, we find that theater eluded control. In fact, we find that tight control was undesirable, as Richard Dutton (1991) has demonstrated in his investigation of the Tudor Revels Office. Instead of the Revels Office as censor, we find a commission dedicated to balancing patronage and patrons to produce the most profit for all concerned.

Approaching theater from the perspective of households also refocuses our perspective on the public stage in London as the center and epitome of performance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. London public theater was not the only high-quality performance in the land. Just as the public theater is not the only game in town, neither is elite private theater. By the end of the sixteenth century, companies like the Queen’s Men, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and the Lord Admiral’s Men clearly had two patrons – the monarch *and* the paying public, in most cases quite comfortable as bedfellows, implying that aristocratic patronage offered perquisites that the public could not, and that the public offered economic rewards that the patrons were reluctant to distribute.

A new view of household revels as auspices for theater provides us with greater understanding of politics and art in the early modern era. In multimedial, occasionspecific events, patrons employed their retained artists – performers, painters, writers, cooks, and carpenters – as

collaborators in theater that could not return a financial profit but might well score sociopolitical points. Perhaps the increasing competition among patrons and the replacement of the feudal system with incipient capitalism, based heavily on patronage politics, finally encouraged some actors to market their commodities in more lucrative and rewarding ways, leading to the heyday of the public theater. But for the recusants in the provinces, the noblewomen stuck in country households or glittering courts, the aristocrats with political and religious ideologies they felt compelled to express, and the player troupes touring the land with passports from their patrons, households offered opportunities not only to “connect with the way the world is built” but also to contribute to the construction of early modern culture.

NOTES

- 1 For more detailed information on the structure and workings of households, see Westfall (1990).
- 2 For a convenient new edition of the Elvetham revels, see Kinney (1999, 139–54).
- 3 Henry Herbert, second Earl of Pembroke, and Sir Philip Sidney produced tilts at Wilton; Pembroke’s son William celebrated his wedding to Mary Talbot, daughter of the Privy Councillor Earl of Shrewsbury, with emblematic tournaments (Brennan 1902, 1: 108).
- 4 For various payments, see Feuillerat ([1914] 1963).
- 5 For a thorough discussion of staging, see Riggio (1986).
- 6 See also Star Chamber Accounts, Public Record Office, London, STAC 18 19/10, fols. 51–6.

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Civic Drama

Lawrence Manley

Civic drama in the English Renaissance consisted of an enormous variety of performative activities, from ceremonial processions and ancient guild-sponsored cycle plays to magnificent royal entertainments, municipal shows, and secular “history plays” inspired by classical or Continental Renaissance examples that were created by the professional players and playwrights of the new commercial theaters. Many of these activities converged in the elaborate public shows and spectacles of London, where civic ritual and ceremony found artistic expression in the use of decorated arches, tableaux and scaffolds, triumphal carriages and barges, and symbolic programs and speeches crafted by leading humanists and theater professionals. In a manner that imitated the splendor of the Tudor-Stuart Court and its Continental peers but also called attention to the urban wealth on which such courtly splendor depended, these shows and spectacles rendered London’s public life theatrical. They linked the ambitions of London’s powerful merchant companies with the techniques of London’s professional theater in order to govern the city through ceremonial procedures, to celebrate the achievements of the city and its leadership, to represent and nurture civic values, and to address public concerns.

The concentration of wealth, power, and population in London made it “the spectacle of the realm whereof all other places and cities take example.”¹ Officially styled *caput regni* and *camera regis*, the capital was most “fit and able to entertaine strangers honourable, and to receiue the Prince of the Realme worthily” (*An Apologie of the Cittie of London*, in Stow [1603] 1971, 2: 214). Even the most magnificent of royal entertainments were rooted, however, in local traditions and in a fiercely guarded municipal status that London shared with other English towns possessing the liberties of freeman citizenship and local self-government. In London as elsewhere in English towns, a *longue durée* of customary civic events, together with an ancient calendar of religious feasts and observances, had shaped traditions of civic performance long before the coming of the Renaissance and Reformation. As a result of civic memory, practices associated with these traditions had acquired a quality of liturgical invariance. An aura of timeless authority

persuaded participants they were transmitting rather than encoding the permanent meaning of the rituals they performed (Rappaport 1979).

It was never simply the case, however, that performance straightforwardly reenacted tradition or that tradition alone dictated the choices acted out in performance. An element of improvisation contributed to the continual reinvention of civic tradition, unfolding against a background of customary events and practices that endowed urban time and space with ritual significance. This essay examines the development and interaction of different forms of civic performance in terms of this ritual significance of urban time and space. It focuses on the common ritual site in London around which the varied forms of civic drama were developed and performed, and it explores the paradoxical interplay between civic custom and ritual stability, on the one hand, and the improvisations of theatrical imagining and performance, on the other.

City, Crown, and Royal Entry

The two grandest types of pageantry in sixteenth-century London were both inaugural celebrations. One, the royal coronation entry, was a rarely held event that had nevertheless been in practice for centuries. The other, the so-called Lord Mayor's inaugural show, was a relatively recent way of gracing an almost equally ancient and far more regularly celebrated event, the annual installation of the City's newly elected Lord Mayor.² Both forms ritually acknowledged a symbiosis between the Crown and local government, which enjoyed its defining liberties, immunities, and privileges in exchange for political and financial support of royal policy. In their very forms, the two ceremonies embodied this quasi-constitutional arrangement (Kipling 1977). The entry of monarchs into London preceded by a day the actual ceremony of anointing and consecration at Westminster Abbey, thereby reflecting both the general importance of popular acclamation in the making of a monarch and the Crown's particular dependence on the support of London, whose Lord Mayor, "nexte vnto the kynge in alle maner thyng," became the chief legal authority in the kingdom upon the death of a monarch (*Gregory's Chronicle*, qtd. in J. Gardiner 1876; see also Bradbrook 1981, 63). The Lord Mayor's inaugural show, reflecting a different but equally important legal arrangement, took place in London only after the new mayor's return from Westminster, where he had taken an oath of fealty before the monarch or the Barons of the Exchequer (Knowles 1993, 163–4). As the Recorder of the City of London explained in presenting the new mayor to the Queen for such a ceremony in 1593, "we enjoy our jurisdictions and privileges derived from your imperial crown" (Nichols 1823, 2: 228). By underlining mutual needs and obligations, both forms celebrated a politico-economic rapprochement that was for each party more desirable than the unpredictable alternative of summoning Parliaments into session.

At the same time, however, the different purposes and practices of the two ceremonies could articulate, and sometimes sharpen, the differences between these two jurisdictions and forms of government. Viewed against their longer-term ritual background, the changing relationships between the relatively novel form of the "loud voyc'd inauguration" (*Londini Status Pacatus*, in Shepherd [1874] 1964, 5: 363) and its older counterpart, the royal entry, reflect a number of important early modern developments: the transformation of civic ritual and pageantry in the wake of the Reformation; the increased prestige of secular authority, and, in the case of London, with its far-flung economy, emerging freedoms, and innovative modes of life, the establishment of a leading role in shaping the nation's destiny.

By the sixteenth century, ritual practice had determined London's canonical processional route, which included both customary pageant stations and a well-established ceremonial "syntax" that connected them. The most important portion of the London ceremonial route began at the top of Gracechurch Street at the corner of Leadenhall, and followed, from the Conduit or Tunne in Cornhill along Cheapside to the Little Conduit at the gate into Paul's Churchyard, the main east–west route through the city. A basic syntax of pageant stations was clearly laid out around the same invariant landmarks that punctuated the route – the Conduit in Cornhill, the Great Conduit at the head of Cheapside, the Standard and the Cross in Cheapside, the Little Conduit at Paul's Gate, all used as stages (Wickham 1959–81, 1: 58).

Progress westward along this series of landmarks involved a gradual heightening of symbolic significance. Although they actually began outside the City and processed through its entire length, royal entries reached their symbolically climactic moments along the portion of the route between the Cross and Standard in Cheapside and the Little Conduit at the gateway into Paul's Churchyard, where the symbolically climactic pageants of the entries unfolded themselves before the eyes of the City's chief officials.

As Gordon Kipling has demonstrated (1985, 88), these climactic pageants symbolically enacted, through a blend of classical and biblical symbolism, a quasi-magical event that Ernst Kantorowicz (1944) has called "the King's Advent." The imagery of advent ceremonies derived from Christ's biblical entry into Jerusalem and from the *adventus*, or prayer for the dying in the Roman office, wherein the anointed soul, departed from the body, is received into the New Jerusalem by companies of angels and saints. In the coronation entry of Richard II in 1377, an angel descended from a tower to offer the King a golden crown, while in Richard's reconciliation entry of 1392, "an Aungell come a downe from the stage on hye bi a vyse and sette a croune upon ye Kinges hede."³ The monarch's advent was thus understood as a salvific event that brought about a *renovatio* or *initium seculi felicissimi*. Henry VII's entry, for example, transformed London into a metaphoric temple, God's "chyeff tabernacle and most chosyn place" (Thornley 1937, 308–9). As royal entries grew more elaborate, pageants of graces, virtues, and heroes were mounted at stations preceding these climactic advent symbols; but the virtues represented in these pageants were understood less as desiderata in the Mirror of Princes tradition than as manifestations of the rejuvenating powers and virtues emanating from the *roi thaumaturge*, whose presence in the city caused the local conduits to run not with water but with wine (Bloch 1973, 114).

Despite the miraculous events that transpired there, however, the climactic portion of the ceremonial route also became the locus for a different sort of ceremonial activity, in which London officials not only offered the City's loyalty and support but asserted the City's power and represented its wishes to the monarch. Gift-giving, deriving ultimately from the gifts of the Magi, was a traditional way of symbolizing the acclamation, bonding, and epiphany enacted during entry ceremonies (Kipling 1998, 117, 161). But the presentation of the gift also provided opportunities for speeches in which officials could represent London's interests and establish the terms of rapprochement with the monarch. Between the two apocalyptic Cheapside pageants in the "reconciliation" entry of Richard II in 1392, the King received a gift but also a harangue from the City officials who lined this stretch of the route, an oration in which there was never "the least hint that London was wrong in the initial quarrel" between King and City that the ceremony was designed to lay to rest (Wickham 1959–81, 1: 70). Such speeches had become a common feature by the sixteenth century, so that at the heart of their enactment, the arcane mysteries of the advent were balanced by a conspicuous display of the underlying political realities; monarchs found themselves engaging in the process of dialogue, exchange, and contractual obligation.

Such contractual exchange played a crucial role in the coronation entry of Elizabeth I in 1559, as the traditional salvific tropes of the sacred advent were transformed into tokens of political covenant. A pattern of discursive give-and-take, of moral reasoning and political argument, ran throughout the entry, and, in keeping with the covenantal theme, the felicities promised in the pageants were presented in a morally and politically conditional light. A pageant on the virtues of governors, for example, made a conditional claim that the Queen “should sit faste in the ... seate of government ... *so long as* she embraced vertue and helde vice vnder foote” (Kinney 1975, 20–1).

The covenantal argument of the entry came to a head in the climactic Little Conduit pageant, which represented, between two hills figuring *Respublica bene instituta* and *Ruinosa Respublica*, the personifications of Time and his daughter Veritas (Truth), who bore in her hands a Bible with the motto *Verbum veritatis*. While suggestive of miraculous revelation, this pageant was in fact a polemical revival of a controversial pageant first planned for and then censored from the entry for Queen Mary’s husband Philip II, in which the Protestant author of the pageant, Richard Grafton, had given offense by representing Henry VIII as having in his “hande a booke, whereon was wrytten *Verbum Dei*” (*Chronicle of Queen Jane and Mary*, 78, qtd. in Anglo 1969, 329–30). By resurrecting this pageant for the entry of Elizabeth, the City of London was reaffirming its commitment to the Henrician reformation. With her shrewdly theatrical response that “Tyme hath brought me hither,” Elizabeth gracefully transformed the political lesson lurking in this pageant into her own epiphanic arrival as the vessel of revealed truth, a Protestant princess providentially ordained to rule in fulfillment of God’s word.

Yet another set of analogies lay beneath those linking Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry Tudor, to Truth, the daughter of Time: if the Scriptural *Verbum veritatis* descended from Henry-Time to Elizabeth-Truth, it also descended to her from the patriarchs of the City of London itself. As Elizabeth approached the Little Conduit pageant station, and “understoode that the Byble in Englishe shoulde be delivered unto her: *she thanked the Citie for that gift*, and sayd that she would oftentimes reade over that booke” (Kinney 1975, 26; emphasis added). The covenantal basis of the exchange was then immediately underlined, for the Queen – restrained from sending an attendant to take the Bible – did not receive the book until she first received the City’s financial gift, accompanied by a speech from the City Recorder to the effect that the “Lord maior, hys brethren, and comminaltie of the citie, to declare their gladnes and good will towardses the Quene’s majestie, did present her Grace with that gold, desyering her grace to continue their good and gracious Quene” (Kinney 1975, 26). In presenting their financial gift as a preliminary to the pageant in which the Queen received the Bible from a youthful female Veritas (the daughter of a masculine Time), the City fathers were drawing an important analogy and reinforcing the policies commended in the pageants, from the call to Protestant reform to an insistence on the Merchant Adventurers’ privileges over those of the foreign Hanseatic league, which Queen Mary had favored.⁴

Significantly, Elizabeth responded to this “positional skirmishing” (Kipling 1998, 127) in discursive kind, highlighting the genuine political exchanges and contractual logic that counterbalanced the advent pattern: “I thanke my lord maior, his brethren, and you all. And whereas your request is that I should continue your good ladie and quene, be ye ensured, that I wil be as good unto you, as ever quene was to her people” (Kinney 1975, 27).

Throughout his account, the reporter of the entry emphasized the quasi-contractual undertakings, the promises and assurances which, depending on the perspective taken, either manifested the charismatic magnificence of the monarch whose pleasure it was to grant them or demonstrated the power of the City to demand them. The whole entry was conceived by its reporter as forming

a connected discourse of moral and political reasoning: interspersed summaries related each pageant to the ones preceding, stressing that “the matter ... dependeth of them that went before” (Kinney 1975, 29). The entry was concluded at Temple Bar by the City’s twin palladial giants – identified as “Gotmagot” and “Corineus” – who bore up “a bryffe rehearsall of all the said pagauntis,” a discursive summary of “the effect of all the Pageantes which the Citie before had erected” (*Two London Chronicles*, 1910, 38).

Time, Space, and Civic Ritual

The discursive “argument” of Elizabeth I’s entry and the interaction between the Queen and London’s chief officials were reinforced by a nexus of traditional meanings that had accumulated around the ritual site itself. When the City’s chief lawyer, Recorder William Fleetwood, observed that “it hath euer been the vse in ... gouerning mens doynge and policies alway to follow the ancient presidentes and steps of the forefathers,” he had in mind primarily the importance of legal precedent or custom (Fleetwood 1571, sig. A2). But in a traditional community like London, these customary “steps of the fathers” could literally be followed along the routes and pathways where generations of calendrical reiteration had traced a pattern of civic precedents onto the urban space.

What took place in London, as Charles Phythian-Adams (1971) has shown, was also the case in Coventry: the government was organized ritually in the form of a “ceremonial year,” a complex cycle of events divided into secular and religious semesters. The secular semester began with the shrieval election and the confirmation of the city’s chamberlain, clerk, and chief sergeant. These events coincided with the feasts of John the Baptist (June 24) and Saints Peter and Paul (June 29), which had also become by the later fifteenth century the occasion of London’s grandest civic procession, the Midsummer Marching Watch. On that occasion, the Lord Mayor and two sheriffs, each accompanied by dancers, musicians, and several pageants sponsored by the London guilds, led midnight processions of horsemen, archers, and halberdiers through the streets while hundreds of constables and citizens maintained a standing watch with cresset lights along the way and at the city’s defensive chains and gates. Thus began the connected series of civic events that created a new London government – the swearing-in of the sheriffs on Michaelmas Eve, the Michaelmas mayoralty election, and the installation of the new Lord Mayor on the feast of Saints Simon and Jude (October 29).

This round of secular events, lasting from June through the end of October, left the new government in place just in time for it to preside over the semester of religious feasts that began with All Saints on November 1. This religious semester included the series of fixed religious feasts between All Saints and Candlemas (February 2), and extended through the movable events of Easter week and the religious processions of Rogationtide, Whitsuntide, and Corpus Christi, the last of which could be dated as late as June 24. In many English towns, cycles of guild-sponsored Corpus Christi plays had developed around the religious procession of the sacred host; guild sponsorship of the plays served to assert secular and civic power in the face of ecclesiastical authority and to establish an order of precedence among the individual guilds within the town hierarchy. Towns with the most elaborate cycles (York, Coventry, Chester) were those in which the guilds were in fiercest competition with the power of the Church (Clopper 1989). The absence of a major Corpus Christi drama cycle in London and the early disappearance of the nearest equivalent, the religious plays performed at Clerkenwell

(discontinued by 1409), may reflect a diversion of London's resources into the expensive pageantry and entertainments demanded by the residence of the Court. But this decline in religious performances, together with the rise of playing in the halls of the greater London livery companies, the increasing importance of the city's Midsummer Watch on June 24 and 29, and a relatively early shift in emphasis from the religious to the civic semester of the year, have all been taken to indicate an early dominance over Church authority by the London government, guilds, and merchant elite (James 1982, 34–41).

With this shift toward secular performances, calendrical observances of governmental functions transformed the cityscape into a civic space, a physical embodiment of the community's history and civic spirit (see Dillon 2000). This space was both defined and maintained by the liturgically invariant routes of public processions and ceremonies, through which the leaders of London literally followed in the "steps of the forefathers," tracing out a highly ordered ritual space and establishing such "places accustomed" for pageants and speeches as the conduits, standards, and crosses used in royal entries and mayoral shows.

The main civic event in London through the mid-sixteenth century, the Midsummer Marching Watch, took in the longest east–west route in the City, processing, as the Tudor antiquarian John Stow observed, "from the litle Conduit by Paules gate, through the west Cheape, by ye Stocks, through Cornhill, by Leaden hall to Aldgate" (Stow [1603] 1971, 1: 102). On its return to St Paul's from the Priory of the Holy Trinity, Aldgate, the Midsummer Watch passed, in the same sequence, by all the principal pageant stations that were used in coronation entries, from the Tunne or conduit near St Peter's and the Leadenhall in Cornhill to the Little Conduit at Paul's Gate. A second civic processional route, followed on Whitsuntide, corresponded exactly with this main axis of the coronation route. On Whitsun Monday, the rectors, Lord Mayor and aldermen of London had traditionally processed from St Peter's to St Paul's, where, according to the *Liber Albus*, "the hymn *Veni Creator* was chanted by the Vicars to the music of the organ in alternate verses; an angel meanwhile censing from above" (Riley 1862, 26). Following the Reformation, the Whitsuntide procession was transformed into a series of sermons attended by London officials. However, antiquarians remained keenly aware of the ecclesiastical history that had made the twin effigies of St. Peter and St. Paul, whose twin feasts coincided with the June 24 Midsummer Watch, the two anchors, as Stow noted, of the Whitsun processional route ([1603] 1971, 1: 221). As Stow also noted, St. Peter's and St. Paul's commemorated, respectively, the first and second Christianizations of Britain (2: 125–7); between the two churches lay "the high and most principall streete of the cittie" (1: 117). In the architectural conceit that would transform London into a "Court Royall" in Thomas Dekker's account of the coronation entry of James I, the series of pageant stations along this route defined a ceremonial crescendo, as the King passed from the "great Hall" of Cornhill, to the "Presence Chamber" of Cheapside, to the "closet or rather the priuy chamber" framed by the passage from the Little Conduit into St Paul's Churchyard.

When the writer who recorded the coronation passage of Elizabeth I reported that "a man ... could not better term the City of London that time than a stage," he was attributing as much to the theatrical setting, a public stage defined by civic custom, as to the charismatic performance of the Queen (qtd. in Kinney 1975, 16). The climactic portion of the coronation entry route was frequently traversed by City officials, not just at Whitsuntide and Midsummer, but much more often on what Stow called the "dayes of attendance that the fellowships doe giue to the Maior at his going to Paules" ([1603] 1971, 2: 190). These "dayes of attendance" originated in a ritual recorded in the City's fourteenth-century *Liber Ordinationum* – the series

of civic processions on fixed religious feasts between All Saints and Candlemas along Cheapside to St Paul's from St. Thomas of Acon in Cheap, the hospital and church raised to the memory of Thomas à Becket. The *Liber Ordinationum* explained that the mayor led a procession to St. Paul's, where he "offered prayers for Bishop William, led the Aldermen in a ritual chant at the Becket grave, and [then proceeded] in a torchlight procession through Cheap to the house of St Thomas" (*Liber Ordinationum*, fol. 174, qtd. in G. Williams 1963, 30–1). The civic importance of the shrines of the sainted Becket and Bishop William (whose "great sute and labour," Stow explained, had won "the Charter and liberties" enjoyed by Londoners) explains not only the regular processions on religious feast days, but the route of the traditional ritual that marked the annual installation of London's Lord Mayor. On his inauguration day in late October, the Lord Mayor processed between St Paul's and St. Thomas of Acon, the purpose being to combine religious veneration with public display of the symbolic regalia that were the real focus of civic life: the common crier's mace, the City's sword, and the Lord Mayor's Collar of Esses (Tittler 1998, 272–5). Following the suppression of Becket's cult at the Reformation (when the saint's name was blotted from the City's fourteenth-century *Liber Albus* and the church of St. Thomas of Acon was transferred to the Mercers' Company), the traditional processions to St Paul's took on a more purely civic character by departing from the Guildhall, north of Cheapside in Ironmonger Lane, rather than the old church itself. The practice of processional tributes to Bishop William ended on "the feast of All Saintes" in 1552, when "the Lord Maior, Aldermen, and Craftes in their best Liueries" heard Bishop Ridley preach on the promulgation of the new Prayer Book at Paul's Cross, "which sermon...continued till almost fiue of the clocke at night, so that the Maior, Aldermen, and companies entred not Paules Church as had bin accustomed, but departed home by Torchlight" (Stow 1580, sig. Uuu4v). But even in the wake of these reforms, much of the old processional pattern remained, including virtually all of the original route from the Mercers' Chapel to St Paul's. Even in the decades following the Reformation, London officials continued to process regularly to the cathedral on fixed religious feasts between All Saints and Candlemas, still doffing their gowns before entering, and circling the cathedral before donning them again.

Thus hallowed by civic routine, the portion of West Cheap between the Great Conduit and Paul's Gate formed the central core of the City's ceremonial space. During coronation entries, this most sacred portion of the ceremonial route in western Cheapside was double-railed and lined with the City companies "beginnyng with base and meane occupacions, and so assendyng to the worshipfull craftes: highest and lastly stode the Maior, with the Aldermen" (Hall 1548, sig. AAa2v). It was here, by forming a buffer between the tumultuous London crowds behind them and the nobility and royalty passing before them, that the orderly ranks of London officials, in full regalia, served as a symbolic reminder of the City's essential role in maintaining civil order. It was here, with the performance of the climactic pageants dramatizing the *renovatio* of the monarch's advent, that London officials delivered the gifts and harangues embodying the element of popular *acclamatio* essential to the making of English kings. But it was here, too, that the status of London's mayoralty was affirmed, when the Lord Mayor received from entering monarchs the sword or mace with which he then preceded the remainder of the procession (Smuts 1989, 72–3). And so it was here, finally, that the Lord Mayor's inaugural show, a novel development in Stow's lifetime, reached its culminating phase, as "the whole fabric of the triumph" was finally assembled in processional order.⁵

From Civic Ritual to Civic Drama

The first inaugural show known to have made use of speeches as well as pageants dates from 1541. The 1539 order that suppressed the London Midsummer Watch, replacing it instead with a royally controlled military muster, cited the expense and the need for genuine military preparedness in the face of the threat of Catholic invasion. But there may have been religious reasons for the suppression as well, including the 1538 Injunctions against the abuse of images. The pageants traditionally included religious subject-matter, such as biblical figures and saints, in particular St. Thomas à Becket, whose cult was explicitly targeted in the 1538 Injunctions (Robertson and Gordon 1954, xx–xxii). The pageant of St. Thomas associated with the Midsummer Watch at Canterbury since 1503 was replaced by marching giants in 1537, briefly revived in 1554, and then finally suppressed in the early part of Elizabeth's reign (Sheppard 1878).

For the subsequent thirty-year period, there was considerable uncertainty regarding the ceremonial priority of the Midsummer Watch of June and the mayoral inauguration of October. From 1539 to 1568, one ceremony or the other, but rarely both in a single year, received the primary emphasis with full-fledged pageants and processions. Cost no doubt prevented the London companies from regularly celebrating both. Moreover, the 1539 militarization of the Midsummer Watch and the suppression of its religious pageants came in the wake of the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace, a popular rising begun by Catholics of Lincolnshire attached to traditional devotion and resentful of religious reform. Similarly, the resuppression of the London Midsummer Watch in June 1549, just a year after it had been revived for the first time since 1541, coincided with Kett's rebellion, which protested land enclosure in Norfolk.

Significantly, this is also the period when, for the first time, both forms of civic pageantry began to speak. The restored Marching Watch of 1541 was the first to have made use of speeches; just as crucially, the first inaugural show to have made use of speeches was also – in a rare exception – staged in that same year. The new articulateness of the pageants – in scripts at first commissioned from local humanists like Nicholas Grimald and Richard Mulcaster, and later from professional playwrights – bespeaks a new quest for power and ideological influence on the part of the city's magistrates and livery companies. The pattern in London was mirrored in other English towns. At Norwich, for example, the traditional Watch was replaced in 1556 with standing pageants and speeches for the inauguration of the mayor at the parishes of St. Peter and St. John (Galloway 1984, 38–43; Lancashire 1984, 239).

A final attempt to revive the traditional pageants of the London Watch came in 1567, when, according to Stow, “diuers prety showes done at the charges of youngmen in certaine parishes” was “lyke to haue made a very handsome sight” but was “for lack of good order in keping their array muche defaced” (1565, fol. 411). Mayor Thomas Rowe laid the Watch aside in the following year, allegedly because of rogues and pickpockets and for fear of spreading the plague (Strype 1720, 1: 257); but from what the Catholic Stow says about the “diuers prety showes” by “youngmen in certaine parishes” – this sounds more religious parish guild sponsorship than the work of livery companies – there may have been some religious disorder behind the “defacement” of those “diuers prety showes” and the “lacke of good order in keeping their array.” In any event, the Watch of the following year was reduced to a lonely vigil, when Alderman John White, a Catholic and former Lord Mayor under Queen Mary, “rode the circuit, whiche the Maiors of London in time past had vsed to do” (or as Stow's *Chronicles* of 1580 more forcefully put it, “as the Lorde Maior *should haue done*,” sig. BBbb5v).

Sir John White's lonely ride may have been connected to the fact that the Lord Mayor who suppressed the Watch that year, Sir Thomas Rowe, had celebrated his own inauguration the preceding October in the manner that had come to rival the old Watch as the primary civic event – with a full-fledged inaugural pageant, with speeches commissioned from Richard Mulcaster proposing a new civic ideology to accompany the new ceremonial form. The pageant text proclaims the coming of a new and godly order wherein the preaching of the Gospel is bestowed upon the City by the Queen. Civic drama in London had begun to focus on a new dispensation of Protestant preaching and public deference to the authority of London's magistrates and merchant class.

In view of the disordered Watch of summer 1567, the godly Protestant ideology of Rowe's inaugural show in 1568, and the lonely ride of Alderman John White at Midsummer the following year, it cannot be an accident that 1568 marks another important date in the ceremonial history of London – the appearance of the first printed calendar, regularly issued thereafter by City printers, of London's civic holidays. Known as *The ordre of my Lorde Mayor, the Aldermen & the Sheriffes, for their meetings throughout the yeare*, the calendar marks the beginning of the civic year with a shrieval election set at August 1; it omits Midsummer altogether and elaborates on the mayoral inauguration. The publication of these ceremonial orders may have been an effort by London's leaders to reinvent tradition by reviving and transforming London's civic memory (Cain 1987).

This moment of civic consolidation coincided also with a general reformation in the nature of civic drama throughout England, when traditional religious theater was being transformed into secular performances sponsored or controlled by municipal authorities. Reformed in 1561, the traditional Corpus Christi plays at York ended in 1569, those in Newcastle and Lincoln in 1568–9 (H. Gardiner 1946, 65–93; Ingram 1981, xix). In Coventry and Norwich, religious plays were Protestantized in the 1560s before their discontinuation (King and Davidson 2000; McClendon 1999; White 2008). In Essex, during the Vestments Controversy of the 1560s, church vestments (which Bishop John Jewel had called “theatrical habits”) were transformed into players' garments for use in reformed sacred dramas that continued to be performed until the Protestant “prophesyings” of 1574–6 led to their suppression (Coldeway 1975). Chester's Whitsun plays were several times altered “to reflect the greater glory of the Mayor and his brethren” before they were discontinued in 1575 (Tittler 1998, 316–17; Mills 1991; White 2008).

In many cases, performances of civic and historical import replaced the older religious cycles. A civic-oriented Midsummer Show replaced Chester's Whitsun plays and continued into the early seventeenth century. Coventry's “Hock Tuesday” play depicting the conquest of the Danes, was disallowed in 1561. In such performances, as in widespread sponsorship of traveling players by many towns from the mid-Elizabethan years, a new relationship between towns and professional playing emerged (Tittler 1998, 325–7; McMillin and MacLean 1998, 41–2).

In keeping with this pattern, permanent public theaters began to appear in London from the 1570s; their repertory included urban morality plays like Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (1584) and *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1590), and Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene's long-running *Looking-Glass for London and England* (1594), as well as plays devoted to the heroics of such famous London worthies as Sir William Walworth (*The Life and Death of Jack Straw*, 1594), Sir John Crosby and Matthew and Jane Shore (Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV*, 1599), Simon Eyre (Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, 1599), Sir Thomas Gresham and Alexander Nowell (Heywood's *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*, 1605), and Sir Thomas

More. Even though professional players and playing became, with the emergence of the first Puritans in the 1580s, a source of worry and aggravation to civic authorities,⁶ they were also, as Thomas Heywood noted in 1612, “an ornament to the citty” (*An Apology for Actors*, qtd. in Hardison 1963, 226).

The Lord Mayor’s Show

One of the new professional theater’s novel contributions to civic life was the Lord Mayor’s inaugural show of the later Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Belying the stereotype of London authorities as staunch antitheatricalists, the records of the livery companies reveal strong collaboration among company officials, the leadership of the city, London playwrights and actors, and the artists and craftsmen who designed and built the shows (Hirschfeld 2004, 9–11; Hill 2010, 22). In fact, most of the major playwrights who authored the shows were (or became) members of London livery companies: George Peele was a salter, Anthony Monday and Thomas Middleton were drapers, Thomas Dekker and John Webster were merchant taylors, John Taylor was a waterman; only Thomas Heywood among the major authors was free of a London company. Among the leading actors who helped to organize the shows or performed in leading roles were such theatrical luminaries as John Heminges (also a member of the Company of Grocers), Richard Burbage, John Rice, and John Lowin, all of them members of the King’s Men (Hill 2010, 91–9). It was in the civic context of the Lord Mayor’s inaugural show rather than through the commercial stage that the largest number of Londoners experienced the work of these theatrical professionals. Their collaboration in London’s civic performances, Richard Dutton explains,

offer[s] the clearest evidence we have of a real continuity of tradition between the biblical and morality drama of the Middle Ages and the great secular drama of the Elizabethan/Jacobean period; they kept alive the use of moral and biblical themes and the tradition of drama being commissioned and paid for by the trade guilds or “mysteries.” (1995, 12)

In the Jacobean Lord Mayor’s show, civic ritual and tradition combined, while always potentially conflicting with, the contingencies of theatrical improvisation and mass performance.

Tradition was invoked by the very route of the shows. Based in rituals that had themselves been transformed in the course of the sixteenth century, this route provided an illusion of liturgical invariance and an underlying syntax for the triumphal logic of the new form. The shows began when the Lord Mayor returned by barge from taking his oath in Westminster and arrived at the first pageant station, the waterside at Baynard’s Castle or Paul’s Wharf. He then proceeded northward on land to Paul’s Chain, and from there through the Churchyard (where one or two pageants were performed), and then to Cheapside and St. Lawrence Lane, the sites where the climactic pageants of the shows were staged. Most crucially, after attending a feast at the Guildhall, the mayor returned to St Paul’s for evening prayers, following a route which led down St. Lawrence Lane and then along Cheapside to the Little Conduit. This route retraced, as civic processions from St. Thomas of Acon to St. Paul’s had previously done, the same portion of the processional route where royal entries reached their climax.

In contrast to the royal entry ceremony, modeled on the pattern of the Christian and Roman Imperial advent, the Lord Mayor’s shows were modeled formally on the Roman republican *processus consularis* and the military “triumph.” The mayor’s “triumph” was understood not as a

once-and-for-all salvific miracle, but as an annual renewal in an ongoing history of orderly transitions and exceptional achievements. Moreover, the pageants in the mayoral shows were not, as in coronation entries, fixed tableaux and arches stationed along the route, but mobile pageant wagons, which could be inserted *seriatim* into the procession itself. The title of George Peele's *Device of the Pageant Borne Before Woolston Dixi* indicates that after each pageant along the route was performed, it was "borne before" the Mayor as in triumph, providing for the construction of longer discursive strings, as four or five pageants were inserted to form a continuous sequence by the end of the day's events. In most of the full-fledged Jacobean shows the pageants were each performed and then inserted into the procession on the way to the Guildhall feast. It was only after the return from the Guildhall feast to evening prayers at St Paul's, on a westbound route mirroring the climactic phase of the entry route, that "the whole fabric of the triumph" (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1905) was finally and fully assembled. In "Cheapside; at which place the whole triumph meets," the inaugural procession of the mayor became most strikingly a formal alternative to the royal advent, as the City's chief official went "accompanied with the triumph before him, towards St Paul's, to perform the noble and reverend ceremonies which divine authority religiously ordained" (Middleton, *The Triumphs of Honour and Industry* (1617) and *The Triumphs of Love and Antiquity* (1619), in Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1261, 1403). In contrast to the royal entry, whose individual stationary pageants could have been experienced immediately only by the royal entourage and only after the fact by readers of the printed accounts, "the whole body of the solemnity" could be witnessed firsthand by any and all Londoners distributed along Cheapside. In the passing echelons of City officials and company members who accompanied the pageants, the crowd could observe the physical embodiment of a citizen's lifetime, the *cursus honorum* by which an apprentice might become Lord Mayor (Darnton 1985, 122–3).

According to the logic of the triumphal trope, as each new element took its place in the procession, it was understood as following from but also superseding the one before it. As the Lord Mayor processed "from court to court before you be confirmed / In this high place" (Middleton, *The Triumphs of Honour and Vertue*, in Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1721), his progress thus formed a narrative sequence of symbolic events. In contrast to the royal entry, the final phase of the inaugural show always led, after prayers at St. Paul's, to a unique destination: the private home of the individual chosen that year to lead the city. Rotated among the companies whose candidate was elected, and sponsored by the company's bachelors (who were themselves raised in mayoral years from the yeomanry to the livery in recognition of the company's achievement), the show thus combined practices of reciprocity and commensality with glorification of the chief official exalted from their ranks.

Supporting this glorification was a new kind of civic mythmaking that, in these pageants as on the popular stage, extolled the feats of London citizens and mayors past. William Nelson's 1590 pageant for the Fishmongers, celebrating Mayor William Walworth's killing of Jack Straw and defeat of the rebel Wat Tyler in 1381, shared its subject-matter with the popular stage play *The Life and Death of Jack Straw* (Withington 1915; Bergeron 1968). Munday, an author of *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, revived the memory of the former guildsman and mayor Nicholas Farringdon in his *Cruso-Tbriambos* for the Goldsmiths in 1611 (Bergeron 1985). Simon Eyre, already popularized in Dekker's play, found his place among the mythical heroes of the drapers in pageants prepared for that company by Middleton in 1623 and by Heywood in 1639. Webster's *Monuments of Honour* (1624) for the Merchant Taylors (formerly the "Merchant Taylors of Saint John the Baptist") revolved around a series of company heroes extending from its founder Henry de Royall to the Elizabethan mayor Sir Thomas White, founder of "the Colledge of Saint John

Baptist at Oxford.” As the mayoralty rotated annually from company to company, each inaugural show contributed to a common fund of civic myth its own version of a story connecting past to present. Each new Lord Mayor, exhorted to “spend the Houres to inrich future story / Both for your own grace and the Cities glory” (*Londini Status Pacatus*, in Shepherd [1874] 1964, 5: 365), was at once an individual story of success and a symbol of the abiding power of the office and of the City’s timeless capacity for self-renewal. The same could be said of each of the shows themselves: each was a contingent theatrical artifact which paradoxically contributed to the sense of tradition that legitimated it. Thus, although the mayoral shows were a relatively recent innovation of civic theater, the Company of Ironmongers could invoke “ancient custome” in their planning with Thomas Heywood for a new show inaugurating one of their members to the mayoralty in 1635 (Hill 2010, 27).

By annually retelling the story of a shared civic achievement, the inaugural shows exemplified the tendency of all renewal rites to “re-enter the time of origin” and to repeat the paradigmatic act of the creation, the “passage from chaos to cosmos” (Eliade 1959, 77, 88). This passage was fashioned by dramatists as a primordial *agon* between the forces of creation and destruction. The pageant that typically began the day’s events, the rough and boisterous celebration of the mayor’s return by river from Westminster, where he had taken his oath to the Crown, was a transitional event that marked a successful negotiation between political jurisdictions, and more broadly, between the dangers of the external world and the community’s inner stability. This rite of arrival provided the occasion for constructing narratives of arrival – myths, stories, and symbolic tableaux staging the historical passage from rude nature to urban culture, from the violence of pagan origins to the serenity of Christian community, from a barbarous past to a civilized present. Giants, sea-beasts, pagan deities, and exotic infidels usually presented themselves in the early stages of the triumph, to be superseded by later representations of London’s Christian virtues and civic harmony.

But in the inaugural shows, which were rougher affairs than royal entries, the threat of reverting to primordial chaos was repeatedly emphasized in the elements of license and saturnalia surrounding the entire day’s events. The route of the procession was not railed, as in royal entries; instead a cadre of whiffers, green-men, devils, and beadles cleared the way ahead with staves and fireworks, while sweetmeats were thrown to the crowd. The symbolic vices and evils depicted at the pageant stations, moreover, were not left behind (as were the static royal entry tableaux) but incorporated into the procession, according to a Roman custom dictating that only the *triumphator*, or entering victor, was empowered to bring inside the city the *spolia opima*, the magically hostile and dangerous enemy captives and arms (Versnel 1970, 309–11). Like the earlier Midsummer Watch, which carried the dangerous element of fire through the heart of the city, the inaugural shows brought with them the symbolic tokens of the dangers that actually invaded the civic space on such historically momentous occasions as rebellions and royal entries.

The incorporation of such symbolic evils into the mayor’s triumph revealed an ultimate faith in the city’s destined greatness. Yet the incomplete realization of that destiny was figured in the setbacks, delays, symbolic retrogressions, and saturnalian eruptions that continued to occur even as the pageants unfolded. The persistence of evil and disorder became, in fact, the most striking feature of the two most allegorically elaborate, magnificent, and expensive of the shows ever staged, Dekker’s *Troia-Nova Triumphans* for the Merchant Taylors (1612) and Middleton’s *The Triumphs of Truth* for the Grocers (1613).⁷ In the former, the Lord Mayor’s progress along Cheapside, from the Throne of Virtue at the Little Conduit to the Temple of Fame at Cheapside Cross, was blocked by a Forlorn Castle or Fort of Furies at the Little Conduit, where Envy breathed out a poisonous speech until a volley of rockets enabled the procession to pass. On the

return from the Guildhall feast to St Paul's, with the show marching in the "same order as before," the procession was once again threatened at the Little Conduit by a revived "Enuy and her crue" until a climactic volley of pistols shot by the armed representatives of the Twelve Great Livery Companies brought the pageant to its narrative conclusion. Similarly, in Middleton's extravaganza of the following year, which began with pageants on the East India Company's outposts in Asia and the arrival of a Moorish king, the mayor was led along by Zeal in a progress toward London's Triumphant Mount, where he was presented to Religion; but as the assembled procession moved along Cheapside to the Guildhall feast and then back toward the Little Conduit and evening prayers at Saint Paul's, the Triumphant Mount continued to be shrouded with mists cast over it by Error and his monstrous companions. Only at the Lord Mayor's doorstep did Zeal, "his head circled with strange fires," finally set Error's Chariot afire and offer up the glowing embers as "a figure or type of his lordship's justice on all wicked offenders in his time of government" (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 976).

In the agonistic means by which they staged the passage from primitive chaos to a civilized present, these pageants implicitly acknowledged their contingent and contestatory nature as political events unfolding in a community as much embattled as glorious, as much a hypothetical as real. While ostensibly representing the historical triumph of London's political, moral, and economic achievements, the increasing prominence and extravagance of the Jacobean mayoral shows was also a result of the withdrawal of the Stuart monarchy from public ceremony and an anxious response to the political uncertainties that withdrawal portended (Hill 2010, 271–7). Moreover, the glorification of the Corporation of London, its privileged jurisdiction and its dominant livery companies, was in many respects a backward- and inward-looking reaction to the newer developments that threatened them – the encroachment of Stuart absolutism and royal taxation; the growth of the unregulated suburbs, whose population of nonfree laborers and interloping foreign craftsmen increasingly outstripped the number of citizens; the conflicts between the major livery companies and London's many smaller crafts and trades; the overshadowing of the greater livery companies by increasingly powerful international consortia and royal concessionaires (Hill 2010, 281–95).

The massive London crowd, symbolically invoked in the shows as a source of legitimation and eloquently exhorted to obedience and emulation, was itself an implicit threat to order which the shows celebrated (Munro 2005, 51–73). The crowd's social heterogeneity, its varied capacities, knowledge, opinions, and grievances, posed challenges to theatrical management of the shows and to what is now increasingly recognized as their topicality and occasional satiric force – their references to economic challenges, political conflicts, foreign entanglements, and religious divisions (Bromham 1993; Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1252, 1397–9, 1714–18, 1766–8; Rowland 2010, 301–69). A description of the performance of Thomas Middleton's *Triumphs of Honor and Industry* (1617) by the Venetian Ambassador Oratio Busino illustrates how the risky topical references of the shows and the volatile emotions of the crowd could undermine the apparent orthodoxies propounded in their scripts. Describing the day's crowd as "a fine medley," "a surging mass of people," Busino declared "the insolence of the mob is extreme." Observing fashionable coaches and an unfortunate Spaniard being pelted with mud, he explained that "in these great uproars no sword is ever sheathed, everything ends in kicks, fisty cuffs and muddy faces." Middleton's show included a "Pageant of Several Nations" paying tribute to London and "the virtue of Traffic" (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1257). In a year when, against the grain of popular opinion, both the French and Spanish ambassadors were in London to negotiate the marriage of Prince Charles to a Catholic bride and rumors were rife of French and Spanish plots to kidnap the Prince, it can be no accident that Middleton supplied

addresses, in French and Spanish, to the only two national representatives to speak. The Spaniard, Busino reported, “imitated the gestures of that nation perfectly ... He kept kissing his hands, right and left, but especially to the Spanish ambassador ... in such wise as to elicit roars of laughter from the multitude” (Hinds 1909, 58–63). The player’s guying of Spanish affectation, the crowd’s laughter, insolence, and violence – none of them found in Middleton’s published pamphlet script – demonstrate the lively tensions that could develop between the “city staged” and the “city *as* stage” (Munro 2005, 58).

The theatrical transactions between these two Londons helps to explain why the Jacobean mayoral shows, depicting a passage from chaotic past to civilized present, abandoned the eschatological metaphors of the royal advent and inaugurated a profane, material time open to both civic participation and popular perspectives. The difference is nicely illustrated by Thomas Heywood’s *Londons Ius Honorarium* (1631), which conspicuously revived a key motif from the coronation entry of Elizabeth I when, between juxtaposed symbols of “*Civitas bene Gubernata*, a Citty well governed,” and a city “ruind, and trod downe,” personifications of “old Time” and “his daughter Truth” greeted the incoming mayor with the message that “Time ... hath brought you hither.” However, in keeping with the same focus on individual achievement that always ended inaugural shows at the private doorstep of the new Lord Mayor, Time’s role in this mayor’s elevation was merely to explain how “you have made great use of me, to aspire / This eminence, by desert.” While thus underlining the ambition and might of London’s wealthiest elite, Heywood’s audacious imitation of Elizabeth’s royal entry also insisted on the principles of commensality and participation; it emphasized the constitutional arrangements by which the mayor’s power is “curb’d with the Limmets of one yeare,” and it explained that “his virtue and example have made plain / How others may the like eminence attaine” (Shepherd [1874] 1964, 4: 275).

Finally, where it was the role of Elizabeth I to be the truth revealed, in Heywood’s show it was the duty of Sir George Whitmore, as Time explained, to “defend my daughter Truth.” Heywood probably evoked the coronation entry of Elizabeth I not just to boost the stock of London’s chief magistrate but to underline popular resentment that in 1631, Charles I, six years into his reign, had still not deigned to submit to a traditional London entry. In view of the King’s withdrawal from public life, a further implication of the show was that the duty of defending the truth of reformed religion during the period of the Personal Rule must fall to London and “those honored Pretors that supply this place” (Rowland 2010, 311–13). Satire, critique, restive sentiments and the force of something like public opinion hover at the edges of Heywood’s show. The public feeling and political tensions of the moment impressed themselves on another pageant for the show, in which all “the chiefe Cities of the Kingdome” came to kiss the hand “Of London, this faire lands Metropolis,” and to gaze in admiration not just at the Lord Mayor and his brethren or at the City’s Justice and Mercy personified, but at the very showing of the show itself. In a manner that epitomizes the hypertheatricalization of civic ceremony, the nation’s focus finally fell on the massed *populus Londoniae*, the nameless but legitimizing multitude who represented the city’s power by way of their spectation:

No place is found
 In all my large streets empty. My issue spread
 In number more than stones whereon they tread.
 ... my Temples, Houses, even all places
 With people covered, as if tyl’d with faces.
 (Shepherd [1874] 1964, 4: 272–5)

While serving to legitimate both the civic hierarchy and the commensal traditions that supported it, this image of mass spectation pointed also to the opaque and volatile elements of an early modern metropolitan public pressing in on the authority vested in an increasingly outmoded commune.

NOTES

- 1 Corporation of London Records Office, *Journals of the Common Council*, fol. 65 (1572–3), qtd. in Berlin (1986, 23).
- 2 The standard studies of English royal entries are Withington ([1918] 1963); Anglo (1969); Kipling (1998). For Lord Mayor's shows, the seminal studies are S. Williams (1959) and Bergeron (1971).
- 3 Bodleian MS Ashm. 793, fols. 128b–129 (qtd. in Withington [1918] 1963, 1: 130).
- 4 On the economic messages of the entry and the view that "it is the London elites – the liveried companies, the aldermen, the Merchant Adventurers – that triumph in this text," see Frye (1993, 27, 40, 48–53).
- 5 Middleton (1626) in Taylor and Lavagnino (2007, 1905).
- 6 On the paradoxes arising from the City's patronage of playwrights, see Leinwand (1982); on changing Protestant attitudes toward cultural institutions like theater, see Collinson (1988).
- 7 On the moral and satiric implications of these pageants, see Tumbleson (1993, 56–9); Lobanov-Rostovsky (1993).

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Part III
Genres

Masque

David Lindley

What exactly constitutes a “masque”? The question is not susceptible of an easy answer. As Twycross and Carpenter observe in their wide-ranging study of early masking, it is “a multi-faceted cultural phenomenon in which masks and masking contribute to play of all kinds – popular and courtly, spiritual and worldly, sporting and theatrical” (2002, 1). The impulse to adopt fancy dress or disguise in celebration is, it seems, both geographically and temporally universal, and it witnesses to a variety of different, even contradictory, impulses. So, for example, the arrival of disguised strangers issuing a challenge – whether in a medieval mumming or a modern “trick or treat” – may contain a sense of threat, as is illustrated in the most famous and powerful medieval treatment of the motif, *Gawain and the Green Knight*. But, equally, the disguised participant in a chivalric tournament, known only by a riddle, or *impresa*, although engaged in dangerous combat, offers the spectators the pleasure of working out the significance of his motto and thereby identifying the armored unknown. The incorporation of veiled identity remains one of the most important generic markers throughout the history of the masque; the relationship and interplay between the “real” person and the masked role is exploited by writers of masques of all kinds and in all contexts.

In the evolution of the masque toward a more self-consciously dramatic shape, one of the most significant developments in the courtly disguising game is described by Edward Hall in an oft-quoted passage: “On the daie of the Epiphanie at night, the kyng with xi. other were disguised, after the maner of Italie, called a maske, a thing not seen afore in Englande ... after the banket doen, these Maskers came in ... and desired the ladies to daunce” (Twycross and Carpenter 2002, 169).

The novelty here lies not in the fact of a disguised entry, but in the taking out of unmasked ladies to dance. “Amorous masking,” as Twycross and Carpenter call it, was much enjoyed by Henry VIII and his Court. Shakespeare and Fletcher dramatized precisely this historical event (with some dramatic license) in *Henry VIII*, 1.4, and for most of Shakespeare’s career this provided

the basic pattern that he incorporated and exploited in his plays. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2, for example, just such a disguised entry by the lords is subverted by ladies who themselves are disguised and have exchanged the tokens by which they might be identified, to the discomfiture of their suitors. All these strands in the masque's ancestry are evident in the variety of Stuart Court masques. Ben Jonson's *Christmas his Masque*, for example, is a co-option of popular mumming into courtly Christmas play, and his *Challenge at Tilt* is evidence of the continuing (if declining) importance of tournaments to the heroic self-presentation of the courtly elite. Both, however, are developed into fully drawn narrative scenarios.

If amorous conversation was the dominant pattern of masquing in the Tudor period – although it seems that Elizabeth was very much less fond of such entertainment than her father – a further, and very important, strand feeding in to the masques of her successors came from the Continent. In France and in Italy in particular, entertainments built around complex mythological programs and sustained by a Neoplatonic belief in the power of harmonious music and dance to order the minds of participants and spectators alike, celebrated and affirmed the magnificence of the Courts in and for whom they were performed (see Yates 1947; McGowan 1963; Nagler 1964). Many Stuart masques drew directly on Continental models, signaling the international nature of these events. Yet it is essential to recognize that the high rituals of the Stuart Court masques were still primarily entertainments that provided cause and opportunity for dancing. Usually mounted at Christmas, or else to celebrate significant marriages or events such as the investiture of Henry as Prince of Wales, they were, however elaborate, always the literal pre-text for the extended social dancing of the revels, which took up much more of the evening than the scripted dramatic entertainment that came before.

Conventions

The masque at Court evolved during the Stuart period, but it was always defined by dance at its end and the entry of disguised or masked courtiers – with or without royal participation – to provide dramatic motivation for the celebration. James never danced in a masque, although his wife, Queen Anna, did, and both his son Charles and his daughter-in-law Henrietta Maria participated actively. The (generally) aristocratic status of masquers meant that they never themselves spoke, but instead performed well-rehearsed formal dances (ambassadors complained that access to courtiers was difficult when they were rehearsing for a masque). The earliest and simplest of the Stuart masques devised fictions to explain the arrival of the masquers and to elaborate on the purpose of their presence – generally to celebrate a marriage, or to honor the king. The form became more complex after Jonson in his *Masque of Queens* of 1609 introduced to England a “foile, or false masque,” usually performed by professional actors. Unlike the aristocratic participants, antimasquers engaged in dialogue, and often presented comic or grotesque figures who contrasted purposefully and thematically with the masquers themselves. So, for example, in *Queens* the entry of the queen and her female companions, who personated heroic women of legend, dispelled their antitype, an antimasque of grotesque witches who had engaged in fruitless efforts to charm the devil.

The dialectical relationship of antimasque and masque which shaped *Queens* is often assumed to be a requisite of the genre, but the nature of the connection between the masque's parts was very varied – as, indeed, the different spellings “antimasque,” “antemasque,” and “antic masque”

suggest. Sometimes, for example, the masque proper might offer a narrative of the redirection of the antimasque rather than its abolition. Thematically this is the case in, for example, Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618), whose purpose is not to triumph over the "pleasure" enacted in the antimasque of Comus, but to suggest ways in which pleasure might be legitimated. In *Lovers Made Men* (1617), the masquers themselves appeared in the antimasque and, reformed, returned in the masque itself. This was a work commissioned by James Hay to entertain the French Ambassador, and its design reflects French practice, which in turn influenced later works where the entries of antimasque figures proliferated. William Davenant's *Salmacida Spolia*, the last masque performed at Court in 1640, for example, had no fewer than nineteen "entries" representing everything from "a nurse and three children" to "a jealous Dutchman, his wife and her Italian lover," and whereas Jonson's witches in *Queens* were presented as emblematic, comically grotesque characters in a substantial dramatic scene, Davenant's antimasquers had no dialogue, but only danced. Yet however formally elaborate the masque might be, it always culminated in the dissolution of its fictional space as the masquers moved to invite members of the audience to join the social dances of the revels.

Important to the Court as they undoubtedly were, masques were not universally well regarded. In 1625, in the third edition of his *Essayes*, Francis Bacon included a short disquisition "Of Masques and Triumphs," which began peremptorily: "These Things are but Toyes, to come amongst such Serious Observations" (1625, 223). The charge has some truth. Like any party, a masque could get out of hand, as in the infamous entertainment presented to Christian IV of Denmark in 1606, where drink overcame most of the participants. The crowds who flocked to masques even gave opportunity for criminal activity, as Dudley Carleton wrote of *The Masque of Blackness*: "It were infinit to tell you what losses there were of chaynes, Jewels, purces, and such like loose ware. and one woeman amongst the rest lost her honesty, for which she was caried to the porters lodge being surprised at her busines on the top of the Taras."¹ And, as at any celebrity gathering, attention was focused quite as much on the incidentals of the dress and behavior of prominent courtiers as on the weighty speeches and elaborate displays that Jonson, Inigo Jones and their fellows supplied for the actors and masquers. John Chamberlain informed Carleton of the *Masque of Beauty*: "yet you shold haue ben sure to haue seene great riches in iewells, when one Lady and that vnder a baronesse, is saide to be furnished for better then an hundred thousand pound, and the Lady Arbella goes beyond her, and the Queen must not come behinde" (CWBJ online, Masque records, *Masque of Beauty*, 8).

Debate about the significance and status of the Court masque was an important feature of the genre itself, for its practitioners thought hard about the nature of their art and the source of its value. This debate is epitomized in the controversy between Ben Jonson and Samuel Daniel. Daniel had been entrusted with the first masque of the new reign, *The Vision of Twelve Goddesses* (1604), and in his introduction to the printed text he explicitly eschewed learned allegory, claiming that he chose his deities "according to some one property that fitted our occasion, without observing other their mystical interpretations" (Spencer and Wells 1967, 26). Ben Jonson, however, would have none of such modesty, and in his preface to the next year's entertainment, *Hymenaei* (1605), confronted those critics who bemoaned the fact that vast effort and expenditure was lavished on one single night's performance by arguing that the transitoriness of the masque could be overcome by its learning and scholarship. Daniel returned to the fray in the preface to *Tethys Festival* (1610), characterizing masque writers, including himself, as "poor engineers for shadows" who "frame images of no result" (Lindley 1995, 55). (Shakespeare, incidentally, seems to have been of Daniel's party. As far as is known, he never composed a Court masque, and his only dramatic representation

of the Stuart masque in his plays, the betrothal masque in *The Tempest*, is introduced as “a vanity of mine art,” and characterized after its dissolution as an “insubstantial pageant.”)

Jonson’s preface to *Hymenaei* holds considerable importance both in defining the ambition he himself had for the masque, and in raising some of the issues that have dominated literary criticism of the genre in the last hundred years or so. It is worth quoting almost in full:

It is a noble and just advantage that the things subjected to understanding have of those which are objected to sense, that the one sort are but momentary and merely taking, the other impressing and lasting. Else the glory of all these solemnities had perished like a blaze, and gone out in the beholders’ eyes. So short-lived are the bodies of all things in comparison of their souls. And though bodies oft-times have the ill luck to be sensually preferred, they find afterwards the good fortune, when souls live, to be utterly forgotten. This it is hath made the most royal princes and greatest persons, who are commonly the personators of these actions, not only studious of riches and magnificence in the outward celebration or show – which rightly becomes them – but curious after the most high and hearty inventions to furnish the inward parts, and those grounded upon antiquity and solid learnings, which, though their voice be taught to sound to present occasions, their sense or doth or should always lay hold on more removed mysteries. And howsoever some may squeamishly cry out that all endeavour of learning and sharpness in these transitory devices especially, where it steps beyond their little, or – let me not wrong ’em – no brain at all, is superfluous; I am contented these fastidious stomachs should leave my full tables, and enjoy at home their clean empty trenchers, fittest for such airy tastes; where perhaps a few Italian herbs picked up and made into a salad may find sweeter acceptance than all the most nourishing and sound meats of the world. (*CWBJ*, 2: 667–8)

Jonson here locates the seriousness of masque in his own contribution – in the words which clothe and present the central device, and which create the allegories which point to “removed mysteries.” That the meaning of the masque is not readily obvious to the unlearned is, paradoxically enough, very much part of Jonson’s positive claims for the genre. He underlined the fact that his work is indeed grounded in “solid learnings” in the early published masques by imitating the editions of the classics in adding copious marginalia listing the sources and authorities which validated his device. The manuscript dedication of *Queens* to Prince Henry makes Jonson’s elitist position clear. He writes:

Poetry, my lord, is not born with every man, nor every day; and in her general right it is now my minute to thank Your Highness, who not only do honour her with your ear, but are curious to examine her with your eye, and inquire into her beauties and strengths. (*CWBJ*, 3: 304)

It is for this reason, despite the effort it involved, that Jonson claimed he provided the marginalia, hoping that they would “not only justify me to your own knowledge, but decline the stiffness of others’ original ignorance, already armed to censure” (*CWBJ*, 3: 304).

In this preface Jonson confronts directly the complaint against the masque’s costliness with a standard defense. As Stephen Orgel observes: “in the culture of the Medici grand dukes, the courts of Navarre, Anjou, Valois, and Bourbon, the Venetian republic, the Austrian archdukes, Henry VIII, extravagance in rulers was not a vice but a virtue, and expression of magnanimity” (1975, 38). In fact, at various moments in Jonson’s long career he responded to the Court’s periodic reining in of expenditure – the 1612 *Love Restored*, for example, presents the character of Plutus, who rounds on Masquerado, saying: “’Tis thou that art not only the sower of vanities in these high places, but the call of all other light follies to fall and feed on them. I will endure thy

prodigality nor riots no more" (*CWBJ*, 4: 206). In the end Plutus is defeated, but the masque shows Jonson reflecting the circumstances of 1612 and taking cognizance of James's speech to Parliament in 1610 in which he had said: "it is true I have spent much; but yet if I had spared any of those things, which caused a great part of my expense, I should have dishonoured the kingdom, myself, and the late Queen" and hoped "you will never mislike me for my liberality" (Sommerville 1994, 196–7). This masque clearly shows that Jonson was attentive to the "present occasion," even as he insists that the work can point beyond it to a permanent truth. Any masque's deviser throughout the genre's Court history always had to negotiate between the multiplicity of the pressures of the particular occasion on the one hand and the creation of a coherent symbolic narrative on the other.

It is worth noting, however, that Jonson in his preface occludes entirely the part played by his collaborators in the enterprise of devising and staging an entertainment. Yet a very significant part of the problem for the modern reader in coming to terms with the masque is the fact that the printed text represents only a small part of the multimedia experience that the masque offered to its spectators. Finally, Jonson remained perpetually anxious about the extent to which his spectators will be able to understand his mythological program. Throughout his career Jonson manifests an edgy, combative stance toward his audiences, whether at Court or in the theater, and is often belligerent in accusing their failure of understanding for occasioning any negative verdicts they might have offered on his work. Yet what, exactly, the audience was attentive to, and what precisely they might have taken from the evening's entertainment are vexing but important questions.

Critical History

Jonson's preface and the issues it raises need to be considered in the light of the history of the critical discussion, since different aspects of the masque have each come into focus at different times. So, for example, after initial pioneering work by scholars such as Reyher (1909) and Welsford (1927), which focused largely on the masque's origins, and on its debt to Continental entertainments, attention in the immediate postwar period turned to the unraveling of Jonson's "removed mysteries." This move was heavily influenced by the interest in Renaissance Neoplatonism and mythological allegory that flourished in both literary and art-historical circles at this time. Critics burrowed into the sources Jonson listed in his marginalia to reveal that he consulted the mythological dictionaries of Comes, Cartari, and Gherardi, the iconography of Cesare Ripa, and a host of other dictionaries and compendia as buttresses for his learning. Sometimes, of course, Jonson didn't quite come clean, using intermediary authorities rather than consulting the originals that he then cited. In the hands of D. J. Gordon (1975), in particular, this exploration became much more than mere source-archaeology as he revealed the care Jonson took to make his mythological narratives cohere in the allegories they presented. Although the later Caroline entertainments have often been regarded as falling away from Jonsonian intensity, and Henrietta Maria's flirtations with Neoplatonism have frequently been dismissed as fundamentally trivial, it remains true that William Davenant, Aurelian Townshend, and particularly Thomas Carew in *Coelum Britannicum* (1634) displayed considerable intellectual ingenuity and depth of reading in the fabrication of their devices. In more recent times enthusiasm for the exposition of allegory has waned, and the study of hermetic symbolism has rather fallen out of critical fashion, but it would be wrong to think that Jonson, Inigo Jones, and their contemporaries

and successors were not serious in believing that through allegory masques could indeed point to divine truths. It is a mistake to underestimate the richness of the reading that was distilled in these transitory entertainments. Anyone working through Jonson's marginalia cannot but admire the syncretic imagination he displayed as he fashioned his narratives. Masques therefore remain a revealing object of study for anyone interested in the intellectual habits of the early modern mind.

Mid-twentieth-century readers of masques were by no means unaware of their "present occasions" – Gordon's essay on *Hymenaei*, for example, illuminates its address to the politics of Anglo-Scottish union, even as it explores the foundations of Jonson's device in "the [mythological] tradition, powerful down the centuries, revived and reinterpreted by Ficino and the Platonists of Florence, whence it was diffused through Europe" (1975, 163). But it was the publication of two books by Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (1965) and, especially, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (1975) that marked a decisive turn in masque criticism to the exploration of the political beliefs which the masque articulated. In his work, and that of others such as Jonathan Goldberg (1983) and Lindley (1985), masques were seen as representing an ideal of the Court back to itself, and, in a version of the classic "new historicist" model, the articulation of contestatory ideas in the antimasque was perceived to be "contained" by the royalist paradigm articulated in the vision of the masque proper. The monarch, positioned in the ideal place from which to view the masque's perspective scenery, witnessed "the triumph of an aristocratic community; at its center is a belief in the hierarchy and a faith in the power of idealization" (Orgel 1975).

In the last two decades or so the monolithic nature of this model of the masque's ideological workings has been challenged. Martin Butler, in a series of essays (1990; 1993; Butler and Lindley 1994) and books, especially *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (2008), has argued powerfully both for the need to examine the individual address of masques to particular circumstances more closely, and for an acknowledgment of the way that masques might be seen as

mediating between the crown and its partners, voicing royal priorities, registering disagreements, and forwarding the political conversation out of which the monarchy conjured its power. They did not re-iterate a pre-determined kingly absolutism but participated creatively in the to and fro of practical political life, exploring the often vexed relationships between the crown, its servants, and political elites. (Butler 2008, 18)

Essential to this nuanced view of the politics of the masque is the recognition, on the one hand, that the masque simply as an event might be "political" in a variety of ways (see Bevington and Holbrook 1998). It was, for example, involved in the intricacies of day-to-day international politics as ambassadors jostled for invitations and as they anxiously read the political runes of their invitation and of the seating position they were accorded in the hall. Perceived slights were frequently reported back to their own governments in much more detail than the spectacle of the masque itself. Similarly, masques themselves might reflect factional divisions at Court, notably in the case of Jonson's *Golden Age Restored* (1616), which celebrated the realignment of royal favor that followed the arrest of Frances Howard and Robert Carr for their involvement in the murder of Thomas Overbury (Butler and Lindley 1994). The New Historicist view of the masque's royalist agenda is further disturbed by a recognition that entertainments were, in the Jacobean period, offerings to the monarch, participating in the tradition of advice through praise of which

Jonson spoke when excusing himself from any charge of flattery. He wrote, in his “An Epistle to Master John Selden,”

I have too oft preferred
Men past their terms, and praised some names too much;
But 'twas with purpose to have made them such.
(*CWBJ*, 7: 116)

In the Caroline period, as Charles and Henrietta Maria each danced in successive masques offered to each other, their dialogue was acted out in the full view of the Court.

Various Perspectives

Many Court masques had other sponsors than the monarch, and might therefore embody a rather different perspective from that of the sovereign. One such example is Thomas Campion's *Lord Hay's Masque* of 1607. Probably sponsored by important aristocratic families, it celebrated an Anglo-Scottish marriage which embodied King James's most urgent political project to bring about a full union between his two realms of England and Scotland. Although the prefatory material to the published masque spoke approvingly of the Union, in the masque itself there are suggestions about the need for temperance and moderation that seem to be only a lightly coded suggestion that the King might rein in his generosity to his Scottish courtiers (Lindley 1979; Curran 2007). Inns of Court were responsible for two of the most elaborate of Stuart masques, George Chapman's *Memorable Masque* of 1613, and James Shirley's *Triumph of Peace* of 1634. Each of them articulated a position distinct from that of the monarchs to whom they were offered. The former urged participation in the Virginia enterprise, and may, more explosively, have contained a coded appeal on behalf of the imprisoned Walter Raleigh (Lindley 2000; Crouch 2010), while the latter, which at one level was the Inns' apologia for the offense given by the lawyer William Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix* and its attack on court theatricals the previous year, yet seriously questioned aspects of Charles's "personal rule" (see Butler 2008, 299–301). These entertainments essayed a conversation with the King rather than mere flattery of him, and are far from simple endorsements of absolutist rule.

Courtiers might have had rather more personal motivation in putting on masques. So, for example, Francis Bacon, despite his apparently contemptuous dismissal of the genre, was yet prepared, at considerable cost, to sponsor the *Masque of Flowers*, presented at Court in 1614 by two Inns of Court to honor the marriage of the King's favorite, Robert Carr, to Frances Howard. This offering was part of Bacon's campaign for political advancement, advertising his loyalty to the King, despite the scandal that attended the marriage. (Ironically enough, it was Bacon himself, as Attorney General, who led the trials of Carr and Howard for the murder of Thomas Overbury only two years later.) James Hay, Viscount Doncaster (later Earl of Carlisle), sponsored a number of masques and entertainments which were notable for their conspicuous consumption, confirming the image of himself that he had created and cementing his significant place in the political pecking order (Raylor 2000). In a similar fashion the shows offered in the previous century to Elizabeth on her progresses were frequently thinly disguised self-presentations on behalf of those who entertained her (Wilson 1980; Archer, Goldring, and Knight 2007).

The tradition of progress entertainments continued in the later period. Many are no doubt lost, but a work such as Campion's *Caversham Entertainment* (1613) welcoming Queen Anna to Lord Knollys' estate must have been typical. Jonson's Court career, indeed, was bracketed between two such pieces – *A Particular Entertainment ... at Althorp* (1604) and his last work in the genre, *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (1634). It also included *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621), one of the most inventive of all such entertainments, in which Buckingham welcomed his sovereign by appearing himself as a disguised gypsy fortune-telling beggar in a work which “staged a playful, self-consciously ironic version of the real relationship between King and favourite” (Butler 2008, 229). These entertainments were a distinct subgenre, largely playing variations on the theme of “welcome to my humble home,” and expensively affirming the loyalty of the host, although they might also take advantage of the occasion to offer the visiting monarch some gentle advice. This was perhaps most marked in the Elizabethan entertainments – notably the Earl of Leicester's at Kenilworth (1575), which may or may not have been a covert marriage proposal, and Philip Sidney's *Lady of May* (1578), which offered the Queen a choice between two figures symbolizing more and less active virtue. (Critical argument persists as to whether the Queen chose in the way Sidney anticipated.)

Perhaps the most significant individual patrons of the masque besides the kings, however, were the two queens, Anna and Henrietta Maria. They had things in common: each of them brought to the English Court an awareness of Continental fashions in masquing; both of them were Catholic consorts to a Protestant monarch; both were active performers. Anna was directly instrumental in shaping the early Stuart genre. According to Ben Jonson, she wanted to appear in blackface, and so suggested the central plot of the *Masque of Blackness* (1605), and, strikingly, it is she whom Jonson appears to credit with the creation of the antimasque, as he writes that she, “best knowing that a principal part of life in these spectacles lay in their variety ... commanded me to think on some dance or show that might precede hers, and have the place of a foil or false masque” (CWB, 3: 305). Anna's choice of women as her fellow participants marked out those who were her closest associates, and offered them the possibility of female performance at Court which was otherwise denied in public theater (on women performers, see Gossett 1988; Orgel 1996; Tomlinson 2005). Although Anna faded from public view in her latter years, she prepared the way for her successor, Henrietta Maria, an even more controversial figure in her own time and in the accounts of subsequent historians, not least because she herself took speaking parts in plays – to the outrage of many – but in her masquing she gave strong impetus to the borrowing of the practices of the *ballet de cour* at the English Court.

It has been strongly argued that these two queens were not pleasure-loving feather-heads, as earlier historians often characterized them. Anna's independence, and her use of the masque as a space to escape the cultural restrictions imposed on even the most important of women, have been celebrated in a number of studies, including those of Leeds Barroll (2001) and Clare McManus (2002). There is critical dispute as to the extent of her agency in the masque (see Orgel 1998), but McManus boldly asserts that “Anna of Denmark's masque commissions and performances and her active political and cultural engagements contributed to the emergence of seventeenth-century female performance” (2002, 213). In rather similar fashion, studies of the Caroline masque have sought to uncover the ways in which the series of masques in which Charles and Henrietta Maria danced expressed distinct political positions. Erica Veevers suggests that “the perception of outsiders was coloured by the links between Henrietta's love of fashions and her religion. Such links suggest that her entertainments were far more vitally concerned in events of the 1630s than generally has been recognized” (1989, 13). Karen Britland has argued

that “the queen consort’s French heritage was exploited in her masques and plays to provide her with an iconography that, while compatible with her husband’s, could be used to assert an independent political and cultural identity” (2006, 224). These claims reflect the influence and importance of feminist theory in literary criticism in the last forty years, and, however great the degree of independence the masque truly afforded its women performers, it is unmistakably the case that critical focus on Anna and Henrietta Maria has further complicated our understanding of the politics of the masque.

The Masque in Performance

Coming to terms with the “present occasions” of the masque by detailed exploration of each work’s political context has been a fruitful area of investigation in the last two or three decades, but perhaps rather less attention has been paid to the detail of the masque in performance. Not all went according to plan on every occasion. Campion is unusual in acknowledging the near-disaster that overtook his *Lord Hay’s Masque* (1606–7). The account of the masque’s central device, whereby the trees in which the masquers were concealed sank a yard and then “cleft in three parts, and the Maskers appeared out of the tops of them,” is undermined by a marginal note that “either by the simplicity, negligence, or conspiracy of the painter, the passing away of the trees was somewhat hazarded” (Davis 1967, 222 n. 44). Campion suffered further misfortune with the designer for *The Somerset Masque* (1613) whose defects the author lamented and the Agent of Savoy memorably described (Orrell 1977). The King himself was capable of inserting a spanner into the masque’s working. In the *Masque of Flowers*, for example, “*The masque ended, it pleased his Majesty to call for the antic-masque of song and dance, which was again presented*” (Spencer and Wells 1967, 171). So much, one might say, for the careful architecture of the masque’s construction – what backstage confusion this command caused is not recorded. Similarly, Jonson’s text of *Love Restored* (1612) did not mention the disconcerting conduct of Frances Howard and her sister, who refused the masquers’ invitation to dance in the revels. They were followed by other ladies, so that the gentlemen masquers were compelled to “make court to one another,” as Chamberlain noted (*CWBJ* online, Masque records, *Love Restored*, 13). The letter is, unfortunately, severely damaged, and tantalizingly suggests that the repercussions of this incident were seriously embarrassing to their father, the Earl of Suffolk.

The failure of this disconcerting refusal to appear in the surviving account of the masque may reflect the playwright’s desire to present a printed text which reflected his ideal performance, but may equally well derive from the fact that the printer’s copy was limited to Jonson’s advance script of the speeches rather than an account of the actual performance which the Court witnessed. Printed masques are of many kinds, ranging from very full retrospective accounts of performance after the manner of Italian descriptions (Peacock 1991) to what appears to be minimal preliminary drafts of the speeches and main action of the masque. The sense of a separation between the performance and the print record is further evident when poets might include in the published work material which was explicitly claimed as not being heard or seen on the night of performance. This is true, for example, of Jonson’s long epithalamium appended to *Hymenaei*, of which he tells us only one stanza was actually sung, and perhaps rather more interestingly, of the highly charged lyric in Davenant’s *Salmacida Spolia* (1640), described as “*To be printed, not sung*” (Spencer and Wells 1967, 356).

Yet it is the scripts, by and large, that survive, and it is on them that the bulk of critical commentary has been expended. But, of course, the masque as an event was the product of cooperation and collaboration among scriptwriter, scene and costume designer, composer, dance-master, and singers and musicians. The publication of Inigo Jones's masque designs (Orgel and Strong 1973) and the work of John Peacock (1991; 1995) have made it possible to see something more, not merely of Jones's contribution as a designer, but in the Caroline period especially, of his position as the prime mover in the fabrication of the basic "invention" of the masque. Jonson and Jones famously fell out over which of them was to have priority and acknowledgment as the creative controller of the masque (Gordon 1975, 77–101). But if Jonson lambasted Jones for his "shows! Mighty shows!" in his "An Expostulation with Inigo Jones," it is obvious that for audiences at the time the marvels of Jones's theatrical spectacles were central to the pleasure they might take in the masque. In terms of theatrical history, Jones's introduction of scenes and of machines that enabled the striking transformation of sets; of perspective; and elaborately painted cloths in both masque and drama foreshadowed the development of theatrical architecture in the Restoration (see Orgel and Strong 1973; Astington 1999).

Some sense of the visual richness of the masque can be gained by studying the surviving drawings. It is much more difficult to recreate the aural pleasures offered by music and song (see Walls 1996). In part this is simply because the music has survived extremely patchily. Sabol (1978) collects almost all the surviving music, and John Cunningham edits all the known sources (*CWBJ* online), but there is no masque for which a complete score can be provided. Furthermore, the musical record survives in forms which do little justice to the richness of the soundscape that suffused the masque. The range of instrumentation and the number of instrumentalists who might be involved in a performance could be found only in the resources of the royal musical establishment. Thomas Campion, himself a musician as well as poet, left the most detailed description of musical resources in his account of *The Lord Hay's Masque*, where three bands of singers and instrumentalists to the number of forty-two performers were arranged around the performing space, enabling antiphonal, polychoral effects which reached their climax as they all united in a chorus in praise of King James. Moreover, the Court masque was vital to the importation of the most up-to-date of musical styles from Italy. Song styles that emphasized the projection of the words over a chordal accompaniment in "declamatory airs" by composers such as Alfonso Ferrabosco, Nicholas Lanier, and William and Henry Lawes undoubtedly assisted in the move toward something we would now recognize as "opera." The link is reflected in the fact that John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* (c.1683), generally recognized as the first surviving English opera, is described on its title-page as "A Masque."

Musically the tunes provided for dancing were probably less influential in the longer term – many must have been assembled from pre-fabricated phrases by the dancing masters who drilled the aristocratic performers in their specially designed masque dances (Ward 1988). Jonson claimed for dance, however, the same transformative power as music was held to offer when in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* Daedalus sings:

For dancing is an exercise
Not only shows the movers' wit,
But maketh the beholder wise,
As he hath power to rise to it.
(*CWBJ*, 5: 226–9)

If the masquers' dances witnessed to the philosophical program of the masque, the social dances which followed had their own importance, both in the politics implied in the sequence of

invitations the masquers extended to members of the audience to join them, and also – and more straightforwardly – in the game of personal display that dancing enabled. Reports of masques frequently comment on the abilities of the dancers, and in the wider social world an ability to cut a dashing figure on the dance floor could even be a means of social and political advancement. There was a cadre of young courtiers who seem to have achieved their places principally through their ability to dance, preeminently among them the favorite Buckingham. He is reported to have rescued the revels of *Pleasure Reconciled* when the King's testy complaint "Why don't they dance? What did you make me come here for? Devil take all of you, dance!" was, according to the Venetian Ambassador's chaplain, answered by Buckingham, who "sprang forward, cutting a score of high and very tiny capers, with such grace and lightness that he made everyone admire and love him, and also managed to calm the rage of his angry lord" (CWB online, Masque records, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, 19). Styles changed in dance as in music, and to be up-to-date with the latest fashion was a mark of social grace. Studies by Ravelhofer (2006) and McGowan (2008) have illustrated the importance of dance in creating and projecting the images of Courts and courtiers across Europe.

Conclusion

The importance of dancing to the masque can scarcely be overemphasized. For many of those who attended it must have been the real highlight of the evening, and the precise nuances of styles, fashions, and abilities would have been eagerly remarked. Yet it is perhaps the most alien aspect of the masque for a modern student to come to terms with. Little remains in the way of choreography for English (as distinct from French) masques, and historical dance styles are little known, and perhaps more difficult to appreciate even than early music. Some sense of what was involved can be gleaned from the DVD of a performance of *Oberon* at Case Western University in 1993, directed by Barrie Rutter, with music arranged by Peter Holman and Ross Duffin, and historically informed dances. It is one of the very few attempts to recreate the whole experience of the Court masque in modern times.

But recognizing the difficulty a modern audience might have in appreciating dance styles illustrates, however, another significant aspect of the masque, one that Lauren Shohet discusses in her *Reading Masques* (2010). She challenges the critical focus on those who commissioned or wrote masques, and questions attempts to read them from any one particular political standpoint, instead concentrating on the varied ways in which masques could be encountered and interpreted by the Stuart public. She draws attention, for example, to the plurality of modern critical analyses of the politics of Jonson's *The Irish Masque at Court* of 1613 (Shohet 2010, 129–45), insisting that this diversity of interpretation itself testifies to the plurality of possible significances the masque could bear in its own time. Ben Jonson himself would probably have characterized her stance as precisely the opposite of his own insistence upon a right reading, but it is a timely reminder of the simple fact that the masque was open to multiple readings even in its own time.

A further complication is the fact that criticism has, on the whole, concentrated almost exclusively on productions connected to the Court. This obscures the simple fact that in domestic environments the vocabulary of the masque could be co-opted very differently. In 1617, for example, Sir Thomas Beaumont of Coleorton in Leicestershire offered a masque to celebrate the marriage of Sir William Seymour to a sister of the Earl of Essex. Probably written by Thomas Pestell (Finkelpearl 1993), it adopts the familiar antimasque–masque structure, but celebrates old-fashioned virtues of country hospitality rather than courtly sophistication – and also praises the "precedency

of female virtue” (Lindley 1995, 131; Finkelppearl 1995). Marion O’Connor (2006) has edited another domestic, masque-like entertainment written by the precocious Lady Rachel Fane at the age of fourteen in 1627. Again it borrows the basic form of the Court masque, while simplifying any scenic demands. The most well-known, and most controversial, of all masques away from Court is Milton’s *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* (1634), usually known as *Comus*. This work has generated a huge critical literature, impossible to summarize in this chapter, but one of the most radical aspects of its performance is precisely that its major participants are children of the host, the Earl of Bridgewater, and they themselves speak. Martin Butler summarizes the current view of the work, writing that “*Comus* was constituted in telling ways against the Whitehall masques, both participating in the masque tradition and distancing itself from it” (2008, 353). Where it was once assumed that individual Puritan voices who censured the masque were typical of their sect, David Norbrook (1985) argued that it was not the masque itself they opposed, but instead they sought a reformation of the genre – of which Milton’s work, with its emphasis on moderation and temperance, and its strenuous moral argument, is the epitome.

One important register of the significance of the masque is its presence in the drama of the period. Masques of various kinds are inserted into the action of comedy and tragedy alike (Ewbank 1967). Theaters could not imitate the scenic and musical elaboration of the Court entertainments, but frequently they use gestures toward the genre as a kind of synecdoche for the Court world. It is often an unflattering picture. In Middleton’s work, in particular, even though he himself had been responsible for Court entertainment, the masque’s disguising is presented as an embodiment of the fundamentally deceptive corruption of the Court. The grotesque finale of *Women Beware Women*, for example, alludes to a variety of English and Italian entertainments yet uses the masque for a scene of mass slaughter (Shewring and Mulryne 2007).

The last full-blown Court masque, *Salmacida Spolia*, took place in 1640. Although there were various masque-like entertainments presented in different places during the Commonwealth, and although works labeled “masque” persisted after 1660 (Shohet 2010, 221–7), the syncretic intellectual energy that the Stuart masque manifested at its best is largely dissipated. Elements of the masque might persist even to the present day, in carnivals and fancy-dress parties, but the peculiar combination of celebration, aristocratic self-indulgence, learned allegory, and moral purpose did not survive the Stuart period.

NOTE

- 1 References to Ben Jonson come from the print edition of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, edited by Bevington, Butler, and Donaldson (2012), henceforward *CWBJ*. References to the 2014 online edition will be noted. *CWBJ* masque records online, *Masque of Blackness* 6.

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The History Play: Shakespeare and Beyond

Brian Walsh

When in 1598 Francis Meres praised Shakespeare as Elizabethan England's answer to Plautus and Seneca, he cited as evidence the playwright's range of works to date: "for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love Labour's Lost*, his *Love Labours Won*, his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and his *Merchant of Venice*; for tragedy his *Richard the 2.*, *Richard the 3.*, *Henry the 4.*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Romeo and Juliet*" (Schoenbaum 1987, 190). In 1623, Shakespeare's colleagues Heminges and Condell subdivided his career output further in the First Folio's table of contents by interjecting a third classification, "Histories." "Histories" siphoned off the first four plays that Meres had listed as tragedies and added six others: the plays we today call 1–3 *Henry VI* (1591–2), 2 *Henry IV* (1597), *Henry V* (1599), and *Henry VIII* (1613).¹ Heminges and Condell did not here "invent" the history play as a genre. But this move, perhaps more than any other single factor, crystallized for subsequent generations both the idea, and the ideal makeup, of such a category (Griffin 2001, 6). But insofar as their vision of "Histories" was so clearly a narrow one, they broached the enduring, vexing question of definition: what is a history play?

Toward a Definition of "History Play"

The Folio's implied definition of the history play takes as its prototype plays by Shakespeare about the trials of the medieval English monarchy. Strict constructionists of the genre will admit some further works to the pantheon, but only provided that they bear a family resemblance to Shakespeare's two so-called tetralogies and *King John* (1596) (less so *Henry VIII*), such as Marlowe's *Edward II* (1592) or the possibly Shakespearean *Edward III* (1590). Alternatively, with a loose constructionist position that takes as the criteria for the genre the representation of historical persons and the use of historical source material, plays such as Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) or even *Cymbeline* (1609), as well as Robert Greene's *King James IV* (1590), the anonymous *Tragedy of Alphonsus Emperour of Germany* (1594), and Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599), can qualify.

The narrow version of the history play excludes too many examples of the historical impulse at work, and obscures the range of interest in the past that was obviously shared by playwrights and playgoers. But slackening the category overmuch potentially creates a good many practical problems for establishing a history play canon with which to work. “Historical persons” and “historical source material” are not watertight benchmarks for identifying plays to include, simply because there will be no end of disagreement among scholars about how to establish either. Questions about how those things would have been understood in the late sixteenth century complicate the matter considerably (Woolf 1997, 41–2). Was King Arthur a historical person? What if he was considered historical in the sixteenth century (by most people) but today is considered legendary rather than historical? How do answers to these questions impact whether *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588) rates as a history play? In other words, what era’s criteria of “historical” count when determining this genre? As several critics have pointed out, examination of title-pages and other documents associated with the licensing and printing of plays shows that the period’s nomenclature often muddies rather than clarifies the picture, at least from our perspective today, when “history” and “story” have more precise definitions and distinctions from each other (Kastan 1982, 37–40; Helgerson 2005, 26–47). This is not even to consider that nearly every play with a claim to the genre mixes and matches characters founded on historical figures and events based on historical records with wholly invented characters and scenarios, and many include supernatural occurrences that embarrass modern historical thinking. No plausible formula exists that might determine what combination of factors will land which plays on which side of a generic divide.

A more practical approach to classification might be to veer away from epistemological questions and focus on setting. In the period, Thomas Heywood offers one possibly handy distinction by organizing the category in terms of “foreign” and “domestic” histories (Kewes 2005, 171). This move is at least implicitly favored by Richard Helgerson (2005), who, while possessing sufficient “disregard for generic clarity” to include *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1600) in his important assessment of the political concerns of the early modern history play, nonetheless focuses only on plays set in England. But it may not always be clear how to make an easy distinction between “foreign” and “domestic.” Is *The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley* (1596), a play about an Englishman who dies in battle in Morocco, a foreign or domestic history? What about Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, in which a good deal of the action takes place in France? Even if invoked, this discrimination would still leave on either side of the divide a great undifferentiated mass of plays potentially crying out for further distinction. For once critics begin to divide the genre into subsets, it becomes clear that the great mansion of the history play will require a dismayingly multiplying number of little rooms within it: foreign, domestic, romantic, mythic, ancient, recent, allegorical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral. And taxonomy fever, as we know from Polonius, can be a sign of a learned mind fallen to pedantic eccentricity. The critic who polices the boundaries of the genre with a strict constructionist mindset inevitably becomes a Hercules fighting the hydra – cut off one group of plays with some plausible claim to admission, say, those set in ancient Rome like *Julius Caesar* (1599), and discover yet another in its place, such as plays that represent the recent past in places outside of England, like *The Battle of Alcazar* (1589). Yet a promiscuous sense of the genre, especially one that tries to construct it from an Elizabethan perspective when notions of the historical were often more labile than ours, effectively obviates the possibility of a distinct category at all.² Could, under such a loose definition, *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* (1570) qualify, insofar as it does present, from an Elizabethan perspective, a past chivalric era?

Many more questions could be raised. But to consider much further would be, for the purposes of the present chapter at least, “to consider too curiously.” A certain classificatory imprecision will always characterize the attempt to segregate plays of this period. As Lawrence Danson has written about generic categories in early modern drama (but also of genre more generally), “the divisions are provisional descriptions of practices which might be described in other terms as well” (2000, 15–16). And, as Paulina Kewes puts it more directly about the question at hand here, “the Elizabethan history play is not a ‘true’ genre if by that is meant a dramatic form clearly distinguishable from the Elizabethan tragedy and the Elizabethan comedy.” As Kewes argues, “if we want to understand the place and uses of history in early modern drama,” we must acknowledge the history play as a hybrid genre, and embrace a varied range of historically oriented performances from the era in order to really understand the impulse to stage the past (2005, 188). Like Kewes, I see value in conceptualizing a wider version of the category more than I see danger in possibly diluting it. Still, in the plays I will discuss here, some grounds also exist for inclusion and exclusion. These are largely along an admittedly porous and sometimes difficult to define axis of plays that have in their DNA historical source material (as problematic as that category is to define), or some claim on representing real persons, including those from the very recent past, and, in a few cases, some that were still living when the plays were first performed. The result, I hope, is a commonsense category of the history play that can bend to accommodate the range of “pasts” represented on the early modern stage without breaking into conceptual anarchy.

The key fact that motivates this kind of conceptual parsing is that history plays were popular, desired commodities, and thus stand to tell us something about two of the early modern period’s most fascinating cultural phenomena: its playing industry and its historical consciousness. The point of thinking in terms of a generic category of history plays at all is to gain a sharper sense of how and to what end the period’s theatrical enterprise and its “historical culture” intersected. D. R. Woolf defines historical culture as

The complete web of intellectual and social relations between past, present and future that includes but is no longer limited to the formal historical writing of that era, a discursive matrix that includes elite and popular, narrative and non-narrative modes of representing the past. This culture is manifested not merely in texts but in types of behavior ... it is subject to social and commercial forces that, as much as the traditionally-studied intellectual influences, conditioned the way in which the early modern mind thought, read, and wrote about history. (1997, 36)

This chapter seeks to locate the early modern history play within this “web,” and to suggest ways that such plays helped to constitute as well as represent the historical culture of its era.

Beginnings

The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 has often been cited as the watershed event in the development of the history play genre. According to this view, the proliferation of history plays in the 1590s glorified the freshly triumphant English nation and thus catered to the patriotic fervor that victory over Spain had created. As George K. Hunter has pointed out, though, this has never been an especially convincing argument given how few plays from the period can be said to be consistently celebratory of England in any straightforward sense (1990, 16). In fact, enough history plays of the period indict past national failures that we could posit the genre as

generally corrosive to any congratulatory narrative of the past. The aging of the childless Queen Elizabeth and the consequently increased fears of a succession crisis upon her death is another oft-cited explanation for the explosion of the genre, especially as represented by those plays by Shakespeare and others that center on civil wars. This can be more plausibly linked to the rise of the history play, especially history plays that might reflect a pessimistic view that England has had a recurrent tendency toward internal conflicts in which individuals put their own aspirations for power above the commonweal. Certainly no one historical event or set of conditions can account for a complex phenomenon such as the vogue for historical drama. But looking within, rather than beyond, the theatrical matrix from which these plays emerged perhaps reveals more directly a key explanatory factor: the professionalization of theater in the English capital.

The opening of James Burbage's Theatre in 1576, and the sustained success of this playhouse in Shoreditch, inaugurated a new phase in the life of professional theater in London.³ Alongside the inns and other ad hoc venues in which drama had traditionally played around the city, the new purpose-built, diurnally operating, and immensely popular playhouses created demands for new theatrical products. Playing companies that sought to offer a shifting repertoire of plays were in need of content, and so of new source material to harvest. History, however broadly or narrowly we define it, held an abundant, almost endless, supply.

The supply included oral traditions, the Bible, and relatively inaccessible manuscript sources, as was the case in previous generations. The advent and advancing flow of printed books, however, increased the source pool exponentially throughout the sixteenth century. History went into unprecedentedly wide circulation throughout the sixteenth century in a variety of formats, such as the influential poem collection the *Mirror for Magistrates* (first edition 1559), but perhaps most significantly in the form of the printed chronicle. Typically massive tomes, featuring an extensive roster of figures to characterize and a flood of events and crises to dramatize, works such as Robert Fabyan's *The New Chronicles of England and France* (1516), Edward Halle's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke* (1542), and perhaps most importantly Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577; 1587) stimulated the imaginations of playwrights looking for compelling and marketable subject-matter. If it is true that conflict is the essence of theater, then the chronicles, with their emphasis on dynastic struggles, furnished ample and – through the competition among publishers to bring out fresh editions with added material – proliferating narratives for playwrights to appropriate.

One prominent playing company emerged as pioneers in transferring the materials of history that the chronicles and other sources supplied to the dramatic medium. As Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean have argued, the Queen's Men were the "first professional company to undertake [history plays] extensively" (1998, 33), and the first group in the professional era to make consistently compelling and popular theater based on the past. While the performance of the past had deep native roots in the medieval mystery pageants and saints' plays, as well as more recent iterations in early and mid-Tudor drama (Kastan 1982; Dunn 1960, 84–6; Griffin 2001, 22–45), it is the Queen's Men's Elizabethan repertoire that inaugurated the most intense flowering and development of the genre, and made it a prominent part of the theatrical landscape in the post-1576 years (McMillin and MacLean 1998; Walsh 2009b). Nearly every one of their surviving plays explores the documented past in some way: *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589) depicts the title figure, the Oxford academic Roger Bacon, as well as King Henry III and his son, the future King Edward I; *Three Lords and Ladies of London* (1588) includes the defeat of the Spanish Armada; and *Selimus* (1592) covers early sixteenth-century power struggles among the Ottoman emperors. Ancient British and medieval English history came under their purview

through plays that are more familiar in their Shakespearean iterations: *King Leir* (1590), *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (1591), parts 1 and 2 of *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England* (1588), and the *Famous Victories of Henry V* (1588).

The epistemology of historical knowledge, and the effects of representation on its transmission, quickly emerged as central themes in the work of the Queen's Men. For instance, *The True Tragedy of Richard III* offers a fascinating prologue in which personifications of Truth and Poetry introduce some inherent tensions in the staging of history (Hunter 1997, 94; Walsh 2009b, 74–107). Poetry asks “Will Truth be a Player?” Truth's contorted response – “No, but Tragedia like for to present / A Tragedie in England done but late” – fails to address Poetry's pointed query about the paradoxes embedded in the very terms by which we traditionally name the genre: history play (Greg 1929, TLN 13–15). But the exchange calls attention to and troubles the truth claims of this, and by extension all, enactments of the past within playhouse walls. When Bullithrumble, the very contemporary, very English clown that appears in *Selimus*, pops up in Ottoman Turkey to tell jokes and cause mischief, the ability of the present ever to conceal itself in representation of the past is revealed, and indeed revealed in. Historical representation, these plays make evident, is always a construct of the “now” in which it is produced. The Queen's Men's history plays, in their interest in problematizing the epistemology and representational challenges of telling history, demonstrate that from its origins the genre was prone to self-conscious reflections on the implications of its own formal status.

McMillin and MacLean suggest that the Queen's Men, as servants of the reigning monarch, handled historical material in their groundbreaking history plays largely for the purposes of Protestant and Tudor propaganda (1998, 33–4). This can be seen in the anti-Catholicism of *The Troublesome Reign*, as well as the prophecy that pretends to anticipate Elizabeth's ascension in *The True Tragedy of Richard III*. McMillin and MacLean acknowledge that Queen's Men's plays, despite this apparent conservatism, can contain doses of corrosive satire of authority. *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, for instance, offers many opportunities to doubt the justness of Henry's invasion of France, as well as his seeming “reformation” from would-be parricide (he comes at one point to his sleeping father with a dagger in his hand) to ideal Christian king. But McMillin and Maclean find such elements anomalous within the group's work, where, in their view, pro-Tudor and Protestant “piety usually prevails” (1998, 135). But as the “metahistorical” commentary that emerges from the use of stage devices such as personifications of Truth and Poetry in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* show, the company was willing to use the history play as a tool of critical investigation, and not only into philosophical aspects of its representation. The actions and character of past figures were put under intense, and often withering, scrutiny. Examination of the plays in the company's repertoire reveals that each contains seeds for cynicism and doubt mixed with those meant to grow “piety” and certainty about the course of the English past.

The Troublesome Reign of John perhaps best exemplifies the way the Queen's Men sought to manage their impulse for patriotic celebration of England, and in particular for vindication of a Protestant-inflected Tudor myth, while at the same time acknowledging the imperfect English past. The play presents its title figure at moments as a proto-Protestant hero, with at least the right frame of mind if not the full will and resolve to reject papal authority. Whatever sharp words he has for Catholic hierarchy, John is fully compromised by his power struggles in the play, and is particularly tainted by his murderous designs on his rival, the young Arthur, for whose death he is indirectly responsible. In King John's dying words, the play points away from such a sullied figure from the deep past to the time of King Henry VIII, and by extension to the reigning Queen: “From out of these loins shall spring a kingly branch / Whose arms shall reach

unto the gates of Rome, / And with his feet tread down the strumpet's pride / That sits upon the chair of Babylon" (Forker 2011, Part 2, scene 8, 105–8). Here, John forges a tidy providential arc to the Tudor ascension and its work in the cause of true religion. Henry, father to the Queen who currently reigned and who lent her name to the company who performed the play, severed ties with Rome as John could not. Through this move, the play ably lends a virtuous prescience to a proto-Protestant monarch, while still harshly critiquing that monarch's failure to commit to religious reform, and simultaneously lauding the present status quo as the necessary corrective to the tainted past.

Such critical depictions of pre-Tudor monarchs as we see in *The Troublesome Reign*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, even *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, helped to bolster the Tudor myth, the notion that the ascension of King Henry VII was providential. Critical examination of medieval English history was a way to denigrate the pre-Tudor, pre-Reformation past in contrast to the Elizabethan present. But it is impossible to know how easily early modern audiences could thus compartmentalize the material presented in a play. Despite the words of praise for a future Tudor king ascribed to John in *The Troublesome Reign*, the play's skepticism toward the monarch it depicts could alternatively habituate audiences to be similarly skeptical toward Henry VIII, perhaps even to see them as more similar than distinct. For even after John has made this pronouncement about his own failures to initiate Reformation, when he is no longer able to speak after delivering this speech, he appears to signal his willingness to die under the ministrations of the papal representative Cardinal Pandulph. John thus reveals his own inability to break fully from the Church, a move which could ultimately collapse the distance between himself and Henry VIII, given the latter's notorious ambivalence toward meaningful doctrinal reform despite his pragmatically motivated break from the Pope.⁴

Likewise, even something as seemingly celebratory of the Tudor order as the prophecies near the end of *The True Tragedy of Richard III* and of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* have dark edges to them. On the surface they offer wholly positive paeans to Elizabeth, but their praise for what she means to the nation is perforce limited by her lack of a known successor, a fact that created uneasiness in her later years and that the speeches, since they cannot predict a stable or prosperous future beyond her reign, highlight. In *The True Tragedy*, for instance, just after the prophecy praises Elizabeth's "wise life and civil government" for saving the nation from "famine, fire and sword, war's fearful messengers," it goes on to warn, ominously, that "if her Grace's days be brought to end, / Your hope is gone, on whom did peace depend" (Greg 1929, TLN 2225–9, 2252–5). Given the inevitability of any monarch's death, and the known problem of an uncertain succession in this case, these words tincture the play's hopeful vista of a glorious Tudor future with deep anxiety about the consequences of the Tudor regime's persistent trials with fecundity.

The Queen's Men may have had official intentions to use history to champion the Tudor myth that were unconsciously thwarted by their sober admissions about the dynasty's limited future and its uncertain implications for the nation. Or the balance may have been more deliberate. In either case, their "invention" of the history play in the post-1576 era marked a crucial point of departure for the genre. The history play might not have a hallmark such as death in tragedy. But if there is a distinguishing characteristic that at least loosely unites the range of plays that can be included in that group from the early modern period, it is their tendencies – with very different degrees of emphasis – toward exposing epistemological and ideological indeterminacy. The work of the Queen's Men, from the start, highlighted the vast dramatic possibilities of staging the past as a murky field of practical and moral incertitude.

In the 1590s, Shakespeare would make his name largely as a writer of popular history plays about medieval conflicts for kingly power that were clearly influenced by the Queen's Men, as is seen from the fact that five of his own contributions from that decade to the genre owe debts to their repertory (*King John*, *Richard III* (1593), *1 Henry IV* (1597), *2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V*). Not all dramatists interested in representing the past followed that monarchial-political path, though. The anonymously authored *Arden of Faversham* (1591), one of the most interesting and engaging plays of the 1590s, takes its source material from Holinshed's *Chronicles*, just as Shakespeare did for most of his histories. The play follows the story of an adulterous wife, Alice, who conspired with her lover and a host of other dangerous buffoons to murder her husband, Thomas Arden, in 1551. While the play centers on domestic broils and sexual intrigue, it gestures also toward important aspects of early sixteenth-century history that still resonated for late Elizabethans, namely the implications of the dissolution of the monasteries during the Reformation, incipient capitalism, and the wide-ranging ways these sometimes interrelated phenomena impacted local communities (Kinney 2005, 97–100). Arden is wealthy and is one of his town's most prominent and powerful citizens because he has cannily acquired former monastic properties, much to the resentment of community members over whom he now lords his power. His novel sense of private ownership over land that had for generations been associated with a universal Church's power and authority does not register in the play, or indeed its sources, as a pro-Protestant loosening of that Church's corrupt dead hand, but rather as coldly transactional and as profoundly alienating of his neighbors.

While his cruel murder is obviously damnable, and Alice and her cohort are never sympathetic, *Arden of Faversham* does exhibit an ambivalent attitude about his death. This attitude was present also in the narrative of his death as it appears in Holinshed, who states that his murder was God's vengeance for his economic misdeeds (Helgerson 1997, 142–3). Franklin, Arden's ally in the play, delivers an epilogue that reminds the audience that what they have just seen is "the truth of Arden's death," before informing them about the fates of some of the conspirators in the murder. Franklin then, somewhat surprisingly, casts aspersions on his fallen friend by connecting Arden's death to his own misdeeds, in particular to his dealings with Reede, a poor sailor who had earlier in the play confronted Arden about his business practices:

But this above the rest is to be noted:
Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground
Which he by force and violence held from Reede,
And in the grass his body's print was seen
Two years and more after the deed was done.

(Kinney 2005, Epilogue, 9–13).

The play registers the dark overtones of Arden's acquisitiveness, affirming the complaints of his detractors throughout the play by characterizing his land-holding as "by force and violence." This play has often been characterized as a "homiletic tragedy," but Franklin's epilogue does not deliver anything like the straightforward conduct lesson we might expect such a work to deliver (Adams 1943). It emphasizes instead that the story the play has told is an unadorned work where "no filèd points are foisted in." Franklin even goes out of his way to add that no one knows some of the particulars of the story's aftermath, for one of the conspirators against Arden "fled, and how he died we know not" (Kinney 2005, Epilogue, 15, 8). The murkiness of the historical past and its recalcitrance to clear moralizing can be seen, then, in plays that concentrate on "local" matters as well as in plays on matters of state (Kinney 2002).

Reading Shakespeare

Theater critic Michael Billington notes that the history play is a “genre that brings a speculative imagination to recorded events” (2007, 390). One of the most popular, and enduring, examples of the history play that particularly demonstrates this description are Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* plays, especially part 1, which speculates most imaginatively on the lively antics of Prince Hal and his companion Falstaff amid the civil war that was percolating to challenge King Henry’s throne. The play exemplifies the instability of generic definitions of the history play through its frequently shifting tones and focal points. Further, Falstaff represents one of the most complex cases where the line between a recorded figure and an imaginatively created one blurs. Notoriously, this character, although his actions are wholly invented and take part only on the fringes of the play’s historical matter, originally bore the name of a well-known Lollard martyr, Sir John Oldcastle. Apparently under pressure by some combination of elite opinion and Oldcastle’s descendants to change the name, Shakespeare and his company changed the name to Falstaff, at least by the time the plays came into print, if not earlier (Taylor 1985; Kastan 1999; Goldberg 2003). That name had its own historical connotations, but seems clearly intended to dehistoricize the character to avoid further controversy. This move, however, does not alter the fundamental imbrication of the historical and the playful that constitutes the play and is its defining motif: Falstaff, whatever his relation to the historical record, still finds himself running amok on Shrewsbury Field during the representation of a decisive battle in King Henry IV’s reign. *1 Henry IV*, with its alternating perspective on both the grave royal court and the comically seedy world of London’s lower-class taverns, and especially in its bravura blending of the two worlds at the Battle of Shrewsbury, forcefully demonstrates that the history play can function as a hybrid genre precisely because of the hybridity of human experience.

Critical assessments of the history play’s development in the 1590s, when the Queen’s Men went into decline and eventually disbanded, have focused almost exclusively on Shakespeare and revolve around a few conundrums, such as the extent to which the plays of his that the Folio labeled “histories” should be considered a coherent series, and the extent to which his, and a select few other history plays, should be read as illustrations of Elizabethan doctrines about kingship, civil war, and aristocratic privilege. A core question has been whether the history play, as a genre, is more conservative, that is, supportive of the regime and status quo authority, or more radical, that is, regime-questioning and power-demystifying. The assumption behind claims for either is that history plays must be didactic in nature and more particularly motivated than tragedies or comedies. That, in other words, an Elizabethan dramatist would not take up the tumults of King John’s reign or the depositions of Richard II or Edward II unless he had a very particular ideological purpose in doing so.

There are older precedents for this approach, but the modern taproot is E. M. W. Tillyard’s 1944 *Shakespeare’s History Plays*, a book that set what is arguably still the dominant critical paradigm within and against which scholars work. Tillyard proposed that the eight Shakespearean history plays of his so-called first and second tetralogies constituted a serial meditation on and corroboration of the Tudor myth. Tillyard reads the plays of the two tetralogies in the chronology of the historical times they depict, rather than in the sequence in which they were composed and performed: Shakespeare’s first tetralogy plays, (*1–3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*) were written first but enacted events later than the second tetralogy (*Richard II*, *1 and 2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V*). As a sequence in the order of historical chronology, these plays, for Tillyard, depict an original crime in the deposition and murder of King Richard II, and then show the subsequent

disturbances and civil wars that resulted from this, until they culminate in the rise of Henry VII and the dawn of the Tudors to redeem the nation at the end of *Richard III*. Tillyard's account of the plays provides a satisfyingly neat narrative arc with a coherent teleology, and it is precisely that emphasis on political coherence and clarity of purpose that persuaded many readers as well as provoked intense opposition. Tillyard's arguments still guide the terms of much debate about the history plays, although critical orthodoxy for the past three decades at least has been defined by resistance to them.

A. P. Rossiter and Wilbur Sanders each countered Tillyard by proposing versions of Shakespeare's history plays in which certainties are hard to pin down. Rossiter writes of the history plays in *Angel with Horns* in terms of their "ambivalence" (Rossiter and Storey 1961), while Sanders in *The Dramatist and The Received Idea* (1968) points to Shakespeare's "agnosticism" or "double vision" in *Richard II* but by extension in other history plays as well. By the early 1970s, the critique of Tillyard's narrowly political argument was given powerful voice by Robert Ornstein, who in *A Kingdom for a Stage* (1972) emphasized the artistry rather than the ideology driving historical drama. Ornstein did not eschew the political, but he did effectively deemphasize the didactic as the main coordinates within which to consider how history plays were constructed and how they had an impact on audiences. David Scott Kastan's *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* further invigorated such an approach by pointing to the "radical temporality" of history plays, bringing to the foreground of analysis their formal status and the questions that live enactments of the past raise about epistemology and about the aesthetic pleasures of history (1982, 3).

Ornstein and Kastan each investigated the plays' political dimensions as they intersect with the poetic and dramatic craftsmanship that produced them, a tendency that was extended by Phyllis Rackin in *Stages of History*, one of the signal critical studies of Shakespeare's histories of the past thirty years. Rackin examines the ways that the inevitable anachronism of history plays underlines the theatrical mediation and past–present dialectic that is always involved in their performance. This point usefully sets up her important reading of how the presence of commoners helps to "mark [the] exclusions" of the traditional historical record which favors an aristocratically oriented *res gestae* approach (1990, 247). A few years later, Rackin, along with coauthor Jean Howard, published another crucial intervention in the scholarship of Shakespeare's history plays, their feminist reading *Engendering a Nation* (Howard and Rackin 1997). The authors demonstrate how Shakespeare's history plays perform a very different kind of ideological work than that proposed by Tillyard and his successors. In their view, Shakespeare's tetralogies offer distinct but equally disturbing visions of where women fit into the historical record: in the first tetralogy, they are monstrosly threatening figures whose sexual power puts masculine ideals of orderly succession and pure bloodlines at risk. In the second tetralogy, women are silenced and marginalized, increasingly disciplined as the passive objects upon which an ideology of male power is consolidated.

While this brief and very selective survey demonstrates some ways that scholarship on the history play has developed since Tillyard's landmark book, it also makes clear how much history play criticism remains focused on Shakespeare's tetralogies. Richard Helgerson bucks that trend. In *Forms of Nationhood* (1992), he devotes a long chapter to investigating some of the territory Rackin explores in *Stages of History* concerning the representation of a wider slice of the English past, including addressing the historical experience of commoners. In doing so, Helgerson opposes Shakespeare's monarch-centered histories with those of authors working for rival companies, namely Philip Henslowe's Admiral's Men, who give more stage space, and sympathy, to

citizens, especially those who suffer under aristocratic and royal abuses of power. Helgerson expands this point of view elsewhere in his work, especially the essay “Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists of History” (2005), in which, among other things, he traces different playwrights’ use of the figure and era of King John to very different effect and emphasis, from *The Troublesome Reign* and Shakespeare’s *King John*, to lesser-studied but compellingly different plays like *Downfall and Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington* (1598) and *Look About You* (1599). Helgerson also usefully considers how Jane Shore figures as an exemplar of commoners suffering in the London and citizen-oriented history of Heywood’s two-part *Edward IV* (1599) and how she tellingly fails to figure in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. Paulina Kewes in “The Elizabethan History Play: A True Genre?” (2005) joins and exceeds Helgerson in emphasizing the variety of historical material enacted.

David Womersley’s *Divinity and State* (2010) offers a recent book-length intervention in the Shakespeare-centric approach to the history play, as well as in regards to the Tillyardian thesis. While the book is ultimately designed to highlight Womersley’s revisionist reading of Shakespeare’s tetralogies, in which he usefully dismantles the (post facto) tetralogy paradigm, he devotes considerable space to paying serious attention to a number of non-Shakespearean history plays. His focus on the history play as inextricably concerned with both monarchical politics and the ramifications of religious change brings important, comparatively neglected works such as *Sir Thomas More* (1595), *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* (1600), and *When You See Me You Know Me* (1604) into the conversation about the genre. One of his chief points is to emphasize Shakespeare’s investment of Henry V with the aura of a justified, Protestant monarch, and so we are back to an argument for the intentional, ideologically legible, and conservative use of history on stage. But Womersley’s route to this conclusion has expanded the field of study considerably, and will no doubt stimulate further exploration of the non-Shakespearean history play.

History Plays and the Reformation

Aside from calling attention to other history plays, Womersley’s work is useful for alerting us to the importance of the Reformation, in many different ways, to the genre. While David Bevington (1968) and others have long called attention to the importance of the Reformation for any study of the literature of the period, there is considerable room for further work on the topic of how early modern writers struggled to come to terms with the implications of religious change in understanding and representing the past as well as present sociopolitical concerns. The Reformation and its impact on historical consciousness is indeed a key large-scale factor in the rise in interest in history and historiographical activity in the period, and is thus extremely relevant to the history play. As one historian has recently noted, in the sixteenth century the Reformation initiated “an extended conversation with the past as Reformers sought to return to ‘primitive Christianity’” and traditionalists sought historical examples that would provide ammunition against any notion that such a return was necessary (Oates 2012, 136). These pressures spurred a great deal of historically oriented polemics and published sermons, as well as one of the era’s most significant books, John Foxe’s massively influential *Acts and Monuments* (first ed. 1563), a Protestant history of the English Church that went through four editions during Foxe’s lifetime over the next twenty years, and further editions and abridgments beyond that. The sea change of the Reformation highlighted the difference of the past from the present, and sharpened the sense that there was much at stake in investigating the past in order to account for how the present came to be.

The issue of religious change tends to envelop history plays from the period, whether it is a play's main object or not. In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, for instance, Henry's attempted conquest of France is enabled by the financial and rhetorical backing of the English clergy, whose bald financial interest in stoking Henry's martial ambitions exposes the unseemly secularism of the pre-Reformation Church. Later in the play, when Henry prays on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, he pointedly reminds God of his investment in the Catholic Church's intercessory system:

I Richard's body have interred new;
 And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
 Than from it issued forced drops of blood.
 Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
 Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
 Toward heaven to pardon blood And I have built
 Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
 Sing still for Richard's soul.

(4.1.283–90)

Chantries, or special chapels set up to facilitate prayer for the dead, were outlawed after the Reformation. From the Protestant perspective, chantries, like indulgences, were a sign of the corruption of the true Church. They were, according to critics, simply mechanisms, with no scriptural basis, for clergy and church officials to enrich themselves and the church as temporal institutions. Henry's invocation of chantries at this key moment of the play invites audiences to view skeptically such transactional spiritual practices, for the instrumentality of Henry's charity could not be clearer: he is praying now for his army to be victorious, and his funding of chantries and of priests and the poor to sing act as down payments toward clearing his family's spiritual debt. Henry himself seems immediately to realize and admit his error, for he goes on to say in the same speech "all I can do is nothing worth," possibly a nod, as Womersley (2010) would have it, to Protestant orthodoxy that grace, and not so-called "good works" is the only thing that can guarantee election.⁵ *Henry V* is largely an examination of how Henry's discourse of piety and of political legitimacy can mutually enable, as well as destabilize, his martial projects. Whether or not we understand Henry himself as having seen the light of Protestant truth in this moment, the play's action is clearly marked by this prayer as being set in the pre-Reformation era, and this helps to heighten its mostly cynical portrait of a righteously speaking pragmatic king and the corrupt church that backs him.

A play like Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1606), which addresses the Catholic threats to England and to the Queen during Elizabeth's reign, suggests one rather crude approach to understanding the Reformation in clear-cut terms: the righteous Protestant struggle against the forces of Catholic Anti-Christ. Elements of this perspective appear in other history plays from the period, such as the sharply antipapal *The Devil's Charter* (1607) or in the critique of Jesuit equivocation in *Macbeth*. But the outlook on the past could be surprisingly open-ended and complex in its depictions of the Reformation and some of its controversial figures. In *Sir Thomas More*, a multi-authored play initially drafted in the early 1590s (but probably never performed), the titular Catholic martyr is portrayed sympathetically, as is the Catholic Queen Katherine of Aragon in Shakespeare's (and, probably, Fletcher's) much later *Henry VIII*. Both plays, but especially *Sir Thomas More*, far from providing safely pro-Tudor sentiments, provide plenty of reasons to feel skeptical about the integrity of King Henry. The early Jacobean *When You See Me You Know Me*,

by Samuel Rowley, also depicts Henry in deeply ambivalent terms in its presentation of the era of the origins of the Reformation. And while it offers a good deal of blunt antipapal humor and rhetoric, it brings to the fore questions of intra-Protestant dispute insofar as it works to highlight and recuperate the term “Lutheran,” which in early seventeenth-century England signified a quasi-Catholic reactionary, but in the play stands for a virtuous Protestant, and thus works to remind Swiss-inflected English Protestants of their debt to and common cause with other Protestant denominations (Walsh 2017).

Legal restrictions on handling matters of religion on stage made direct commentary on a good amount of Reformation-related material risky, but a number of plays sought nonetheless at least to get within striking distance of addressing the compelling events of the early and mid-sixteenth century for late sixteenth-, and early seventeenth-century audiences. In *Sir Thomas More*, a play that ran into trouble with the censors for its attempt to stage urban rioting, the doctrinal objection More has to Henry’s disregard for papal authority, and thus the direct cause of More’s execution, is never explicitly stated. Instead it is framed only as a matter of disobedience to authority. Since the religious element of More’s resistance could not have escaped audiences (and even if the play was never performed, it was intended to be presented to audiences), and since More is repeatedly held up as a more virtuous man than the king who will put him to death, the authors put under stress that obedience to prevailing authority in religious matters is always in order. Indeed, because, as Wormersley has reminded us, politics and religion were always intertwined in this period, many plays tend to emphasize the political dimensions of what might otherwise be seen as sectarian conflicts. In *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (1604) the vilification of the Catholic figures dedicated to securing Queen Mary’s right to the throne makes the play’s Protestant sympathies clear. But when given the chance, on the scaffold, to renounce her enemies or defend herself on religious grounds, the thwarted Protestant candidate to succeed King Edward VI, Jane Grey, refuses to do so. Called a “heretic,” Jane responds: “We are Christians, leave our conscience to our selves: / We stand not here about religious causes / But are accused of capital treason” (Bowers 1953, 5.1.111–14). It is both a dignified refusal to be baited into divisive religious controversy and a futile fantasy that religion and politics could, in fact, be kept separate: whatever the official charges against her, Jane is being put to death in large part because her religion makes her unfit to be queen in the eyes of the Catholic powers who currently have leverage in the land. This was a poignant reminder to Elizabethan audiences that spiritual commitments, especially in the post-Reformation era of suspicion and intolerance for dissent, could never be matters only of individual faith and private conscience.

The play *Thomas Lord Cromwell* is also clearly anti-Catholic, in particular in its depiction of Bishop Stephen Gardiner, a bogey man of the Protestant imagination as deployed in several plays from the era. But it also minimizes the amount of doctrinal controversy actually broached, and when it does stage an argument between Cromwell and Gardiner over the dissolution of the monasteries, it surprisingly leaves the matter unresolved (Womersley 2010, 231). While this hardly makes the play even-handed in its representation of Catholicism, it does demonstrate the history play’s capacity to foreground the many still unsettled feelings that lingered around the legacy of the Reformation, especially in terms of its impact on local communities and charity, key issues often invoked in laments for the lost monastic system. Questions about social obligations in the wake of the Reformation’s radical revision of systems for public charity indeed reverberate in a range of ways in many plays. *Cromwell* and *Sir Thomas More* underline the “honest citizen” nature of its title figure. Both plays are interested in showing the social mobility and the generosity of their protagonists, and thus complement their depiction of the tumultuous events

of the sixteenth century around the break with Rome with an emphasis on the humanity and capacity for fellowship of prominent historical figures. Indeed, while plays like *More* and *Cromwell*, along with Heywood's two-part *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1604; 1605), which, in its second part, also depicts vigorous urban citizens and what they bequeath to the public good, can be considered together in terms of their status as Reformation plays, they can also be productively read alongside a London proto-city comedy/history play like Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, which presents the story of a figure from the chronicles, Simon Eyre, and how his rise to Lord Mayor became for him a means to act as a benefactor for London's citizens. The plays each in different ways highlight how past generosity creates legacies for the present that always require new individuals to perpetuate.

While such emphasis on urban fellowship may have covered over some deep divisions, other plays about religious change and the relatively recent past could draw attention to the ever present dangers of factionalism. Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* offered English audiences the spectacle of their French coreligionists slaughtered by Catholic forces during the Massacre. While this is in a straightforward sense a play about the evils of Catholic persecution, it also depicts the threat of religious civil war and asserts the importance of moderation on the part of the religious majority in a balkanized society. In the face of a divided society, *Massacre at Paris* (1593) suggests, however faintly, that the majority, and especially the ruling elite, should pursue a policy of tolerance rather than of coercive force. Late in the play, the French king, Henri III, says of the Duke of Guise, his Catholic coreligionist and instigator of the massacre of French Protestants, "This is the traitor that hath spent my gold / In making foreign wars and civil broils" (21.98–9). The distaste for the St. Bartholomew's Day terror expressed here is framed in practical terms: "civil broils" are costly, disruptive, and weaken the nation (Walsh 2016). Whether a matter of "conscience" or of order, the play in these moments articulates a rationale for religious toleration amid its louder and more sensational representations of the internal and international threat Catholics pose to Protestants everywhere, and especially to the English Queen and her people (e.g. 24.55–68).

Recognition of, and perhaps even hints of tolerance for, other kinds of social difference registered through enactments of other recent historical figures and events. Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (1608), for instance, presents a character based on a current, living figure, and thus blurs the line between historical representation and almost journalistic-style theater in enacting a version of the real. The play revolves around an infamous cross-dressing Londoner named Mary Frith, better known to her contemporaries as Moll Cutpurse. The representation of gender transgression in the play is extremely complex and not necessarily progressive by modern standards. Middleton and Dekker demurely hint in the epistle to the published version of the play that they have actually mitigated some aspects of the historical Moll's notorious reputation and nature to make her more palatable for audiences. They are clearly invested in promoting a triumph of heteronormative union for their other heroine, also named Mary. But Moll still emerges from the play as something like a minor counterculture hero. She steadfastly refuses to consider marriage for herself, a decision which the play does not endorse, but also does not credibly condemn or critique. And at the play's end, Sir Alexander, the voice of established London patriarchal order, and Moll's frequent antagonist, finds himself seeking her forgiveness and swearing he will no longer judge others according to the type of wicked rumors that have slandered her. She spends the play riling and outsmarting the stupid and the wicked, and aiding the course of the virtuous, true love of the other Mary. Her otherness and her goodness are coincident at the play's end, so that again, however faintly, this play does propose a historical precedent for living differently and for living with difference.

Conclusion

If history plays could use the recent past to suggest courses of current policy, they also offered audiences entertainment value based on the exotic “otherness” of history. Much of the appeal of history plays was surely the sense to which they made evident, in the twentieth-century novelist L. P. Hartley’s startling phrase, that “the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there” ([1953] 2002, 17). The elaborate chivalric tournament ritual that occurs early in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, a scene that slows down narrative drive to a crawl and foregrounds almost comically stilted pronouncements and numbingly repetitive heraldic introductions, gave audiences in the 1590s the chance to witness imaginatively an archaic, floridly ceremonial order for resolving disputes. Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (1599) concerns a signal event in world history, the death of its title figure. The machinations for power that led to and followed from his assassination no doubt felt familiar to Elizabethan audiences used to seeing English dynastic struggle and civil strife enacted on stage. It opens, though, during the celebration of the Roman Feast of Lupercal, during which, audiences quickly learn, two Romans were to run ceremoniously through the city, and “the barren,” when “touchéd in this holy chase,” would “Shake off their sterile curse” (1.2.10–11). Such details lend the past an air of tantalizing mystery and surprise, making audiences aware of their distance from the time and place being represented to them. When in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, Dekker stages several fifteenth-century “origin” moments for things that Elizabethan viewers would take for granted, from the construction of buildings to establishment of holidays, we see how history plays could both alienate the past by emphasizing its difference as well as suggesting some sort of connection by planting seeds there that contemporary audiences would recognize as currently blooming in their landscape.

History plays have most often been understood in scholarship in narrowly political terms. There is no denying the political ramifications of many of these plays’ representation of dynastic squabbles and the nature of monarchical power and authority more generally. But history plays can be understood in terms of the ideologies they explore without reducing them to their ideologies, or even to the ideological. History plays provided benefits that were more aesthetic, conceptual, and even emotional. D. R. Woolf writes:

The reality of life in early modern England is that everywhere such ingrown assumptions as the intrinsic value of oldness were being assailed increasingly by a social, cultural, and technological environment in which new things and new events were increasingly evident to the senses, rupturing the experience of time, widening the fissure of past and present, and rendering visible what had once been a seamless connection between the current and the traditional. (2003, 45)

Since at least the time of Petrarch and the Italian humanists, European culture had become increasingly infatuated with the idea of history as elusive, of exactly this “widening fissure of past and present.” In Shakespeare’s lifetime in England, this sense of the past’s ineffability was met by a growing antiquarian impulse, represented most prominently by the work of William Camden (Burke 1969; Herendeen 2007). Camden’s proto-archaeological approach to material remnants of Roman Britain helped create new expectations for the evidentiary basis for historical knowledge. At the same time, Camden frankly admitted the limits of what we can know about the past in his acknowledgment of the importance of “conjectures” to all historical thinking (Herendeen 2007, 202). It is the opportunity for playful conjecture and the pleasures that the

speculative imagination can return in the face of an absent and unknowable past that perhaps best account for the popularity of the history play genre in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. “Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare” writes Shakespeare in Sonnet 64. It is conventional within Renaissance lyrics for speakers to locate their motivation to write in feelings of loss and unobtainable desire. Lack produces art. The ruins of time, the losses of history, the absence of what came before – all motivated early modern playwrights and audiences to ruminare on the fugitive past through the fantasies of presence that history plays provided.

The history play remained a viable genre on the early modern professional stage from its first beginnings until the closing of the theaters in 1642, despite certain critical narratives of decline that take the Shakespearean history play as “normative” (Griffin 2001, 6; Kewes 2005, 186). History plays like those of Shakespeare’s so-called tetralogies did peter out after 1600 or so, so that when John Ford brought the Shakespearean homage *Perkin Warbeck* to the stage sometime in the early 1630s, he presented it as a self-conscious revival. But by the more inclusive definition of the history play we have been working with here, the staging of historical material never went away: from *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* in the Shakespeare canon, not to mention *Henry VIII* – his “outlier” in style and composition date in the Folio history category – to Jonson’s *Sejanus* (1603) and *Catiline* (1611), Daborne’s *A Christian Turn’d Turk* (1612), *The Hector of Germany, or, The Palsgrave, Prime Elector* (c.1614–15), Fletcher and Massinger’s *The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavelt* (1619), Markham and Sampson’s *The True Tragedy of Herod and Antipater* (c.1619–22), and Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* (1624), we see that even as the preferred flavors may have grown increasingly diverse, audiences never lost their appetites for plays about the past, and about real or reputedly real figures and events.⁶

NOTES

- 1 Dates for plays mentioned in this essay are taken from Harbage (1989).
- 2 Kewes (2005) presents an extremely thoughtful and learned investigation into the history play’s form and content that sets a precedent for a looser, pragmatic view of the genre, and has influenced my own work in this essay.
- 3 Other London theatrical venues, even purpose-built ones, did precede the Theatre, namely the Red Lion, built in 1567. However, due to the greater prominence and sustained success of the Theatre, its opening in 1576 is usually given pride of place in the annals of Elizabethan dramatic history. On early London playing spaces of the period, prior to and including the Theatre, see Wickham, Berry, and Ingram (2000), 290–332; and David Kathman’s chapter 16 in this volume.
- 4 Pandulph instructs John to “lift up thy hand, that we may witness here / Thou diedst the servant of our Saviour Christ,” which, although pan-Christian sounding, more likely indicates a Catholic inflection to his death rites, given Pandulph’s status as a zealous papist. No original stage direction indicates whether John does make a gesture, but Pandulph’s next line “Now joy betide they soul” seems to indicate that he does (Forker 2011, Part 2, scene 8, 147–8).
- 5 On this moment in *Henry V* and its implications for thinking about early modern historical consciousness, see Walsh (2009a). In the 1600 quarto version of the play, Henry sums up his prayer more simply by noting that “all that I can do, is all too little.” On the speech and Protestant soteriology, in addition to Womersley (2010, 336–9), see Taylor (1982, 295–301) and Cox (2007, 155–7).
- 6 Kewes (2005, 188) extends this argument even further to the post-1642 landscape by considering “dramatic pieces and pamphlets in dramatic form” published after the closing of the theaters.

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Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage

Lena Cowen Orlin

At about the time that the play *Arden of Faversham* was being staged in London, in early 1591, Alice Suttill was called before the Consistory Court of Canterbury.¹ Her husband, William, suspected her of committing adultery and seeking his death. The couple's servant, Margaret Christmas, testified to an unquiet household. Alice frequently railed at William, gave him no warning when she stayed out as late as ten o'clock at night, once shut him out of their house, and boasted that she was "ordained to be a scourge and whip to plague and vex" him. Margaret reported one day's errands in particular detail: she was dispatched by Alice to Edward Winterborne's to fetch twenty shillings, was referred by Winterborne to a man named Ward, and when she eventually returned from Ward's, found Winterborne at home with Alice. Clearly, Margaret believed that she had conveyed a prearranged signal to Winterborne, and that her mistress had committed adultery with this man. As for the charge of homicidal intent, Margaret recalled the day she was dismissed from the Suttill parlor so that Alice could talk privately with a man named Thomas Fanshame. Complicated narratives about monies and services exchanged among Alice, Fanshame, and Fanshame's wife seem to establish that Alice had commissioned a "token" from the couple. This was a piece of paper that Alice had been seen to wear about her neck and had once hidden in a cellar woodpile. She claimed that the paper was a charm to make her husband love her again. William Suttill, however, believed that it was inscribed with satanic writings threatening his life, and others testified that the death of a neighbor caused Alice to complain that according to Fanshame, William was to have been the next in the parish to die. In the case of *Suttill contra Suttill*, William was granted the right to live separately from his wife.

Meanwhile, sometime between 1589 and 1592, *Arden of Faversham* is thought to have initiated the genre of "domestic tragedy" by dramatizing a notorious true crime: an adulterous woman and her lover succeed in murdering her husband after numerous failed attempts and with the aid of many willing collaborators. The crime dated back to 1550, but it had percolated slowly through the textual filters of local record and county chronicle before finally reaching a

national readership in 1577 with Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. For the next century, other domestic crimes that caught the public imagination were likened to the Arden case for their degree of what Holinshed called "horribleness."² The "horribleness" of the Arden story inhered both in Alice's murderous persistence despite her husband's many escapes and in the sheer number of her accomplices – the play describes seven who were executed and two who eluded justice.

This overplus of plots and plotters would seem to have set the Arden story apart from its culture as an anomaly. As the case of Alice and William Suttill instead goes to show, the precipitating issues and anxieties dramatized by *Arden of Faversham* were not unique to it. A key difference between the Suttills and the Ardens was that if Alice Suttill had indeed commissioned black magic against her husband, it did not succeed. In this respect, the Arden story was the more sensational and the more stageworthy. But sensation was by no means the only element of *Arden's* public value. Like *Suttill* contra *Suttill*, the story played out some of the most bitter contestations of Elizabethan private life, with husband and wife competing for control of their home, with servants drawn into household conflicts, and with the larger community of neighbors and townspeople similarly dividing their allegiances. Unsettled power relations in betrothal and marriage, the nature of authority in the household and its gendering, and transgressions against social order and community responsibility were all real issues, and these may have been at least as compelling to the playgoing audience as was true crime.

There is one further, telling analogy between the Suttill and Arden stories: on the margins of both can be glimpsed public figures whose networks of political interest were entangled in these dysfunctional marriages. Edward Winterborne, Alice Suttill's alleged lover, was steward to one of the most powerful men in Kent, Richard Rogers, then Bishop of Dover. When Alice suffered a breakdown, it is reported that she was cared for – and perhaps interrogated – in the Bishop's house. After Alice charged Thomas Fanshame with practicing witchcraft, he was prosecuted before the same Bishop of Dover. There are larger political implications to the Arden case as well: Alice Arden was the stepdaughter of Sir Edward North, Chancellor of Henry VIII's Court of Augmentations and both Member of Parliament and member of the Privy Council. North's first clerk at the Augmentations was Thomas Arden, and North's steward was the man named Mosby who became notorious as Alice's lover and collaborator in murder. Arden himself represented a generation of social and economic change as one of the "new men" who established their wealth and influence in consequence of the dissolution of the monasteries and the expansion of government bureaucracies.³

These larger associations in the Arden case are chiefly discernible through what appear to be cracks in the public record. Holinshed mentions Mosby's connection with North, for example, but suppresses those of Thomas and Alice. Erasures such as these make it all the more remarkable, first, that Holinshed chose to recount Arden's story and, second, that he then apologized for doing so. "Horribleness" was his justification: "otherwise it may seem to be but a private matter, and therefore as it were impertinent to this history." So uncertain a posture is entirely self-created. Given Arden's stature with the central government, his participation in landmark historical events, and the involvement of the Privy Council in the investigation of his murder, his tale could have been told in such a way as to make no apology necessary. While Arden's connections may have been complicit in bringing his murder to public attention, the more potent cultural force of his story evidently lay elsewhere, in the private realm to which the *Chronicles* refers. The contestations and contentions of private life may have required some public forum, and this, in its various recountings, the Arden story helped construct.

At nearly five text-heavy, double-columned folio pages, the *Chronicles'* account of the "whole murder" is surprisingly detailed, describing how each accomplice was enlisted, how an innocent man was unjustly implicated, how the crime was finally perpetrated, how the subsequent investigation was conducted, and how those involved were exposed and punished. But while the *Chronicles* was clearly the play's primary source, *Arden of Faversham* focuses less strictly on these matters of "horribleness." Instead, private issues move even further to the foreground, so that the play derives at least as much of its energy from the motivations, internal conflicts, and interpersonal relations of its characters. Like a case in a church court, with its variety of perspectives aired in sequential witness depositions, *Arden* shows each character viewing the world through the lens of his or her own fears and desires. There is Thomas Arden, resisting and ignoring his suspicions about Alice's unfaithfulness; Alice, prolonging his uncertainties by alternately lavishing affection on him, flaunting her disdain for him, and aggressively lodging her own accusations against him; Mosby, wavering from but then allowing himself to be re-seduced to the love affair and the murder plot; and each new accomplice, succumbing to an approach shrewdly tailored to his own greeds and aspirations. The *Chronicles'* apology for representing a "private matter" has worked to obscure from us the ways in which that account in fact emphasized the sensational aspects of the story that most removed it from the relational concerns occupying the daily lives of *Arden's* audiences. For many years these had their best airing in neighborhood gossip and disputes of the sort that made their way to the church courts, as did the case of *Suttill* contra *Suttill* – until, that is, the genre of domestic tragedy made private matters part of the new public culture constituted by the commercial stage.

Defining a Genre

The term "domestic tragedy" was not applied to plays like *Arden of Faversham* in their own time. In 1831, John Payne Collier remarked certain distinguishing similarities among the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (1592), the anonymous *Warning for Fair Women* (1599), Robert Yarrington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (1601), the anonymous *Fair Maid of Bristow* (1605), and the anonymous *Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608).⁴ These plays shared localized English settings, journalistic content, and unadorned style. Collier labeled them for their affinities to some eighteenth-century French plays Diderot had characterized as tragedies "domestique[s] et bourgeoisie[s]" (1831, 49). In 1884, John Addington Symonds added to the list Thomas Heywood's *Woman Killed with Kindness* (1607) and Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley's *Witch of Edmonton* (c.1621), both of which contain fictional plots with the same domestic settings and concerns as the true-crime plays.

The first fully fledged study of the genre was completed by Edward Ayers Taylor in a dissertation of 1925. Taylor also reported on lost plays which, had they survived, might have far expanded our notion of the popularity and cultural significance of the genre. From Henslowe's *Diary* alone come the following titles:

The History of Friar Francis (performed as an "old play" in 1594)

The Merchant of Emden (performed by the Admiral's Men in 1594)

The Witch of Islington (performed by the Admiral's Men in 1597)

Black Bateman of the North (a two-part play for which Henry Chettle, Robert Wilson, Michael Drayton, and Thomas Dekker were paid in 1598)

- Page of Plymouth* (for which Ben Jonson and Thomas Dekker were paid in 1599)
The Stepmother's Tragedy (for which Henry Chettle and Thomas Dekker were paid in 1599)
Cox of Collumpton (for which John Day and William Haughton were paid in 1599)
Bristow Tragedy (for which John Day was paid in 1602)
William Cartwright (for which William Haughton was paid in 1602)
Black Dog of Newgate (a two-part play for which John Day, Wentworth Smith, Richard Hathaway, and "the other poet" were paid in 1603)
Shore's Wife (for which Henry Chettle and John Day were paid in 1603)

Also mentioned often are *An History of the Cruelty of a Stepmother* (performed at Court in 1578), *The History of Murderous Michael* (performed at Court in 1579), and Thomas Dekker, John Ford, William Rowley, and John Webster's *Late Murder of the Son upon the Mother* (performed at Court in 1624; this play was also known as *The Late Murder in White-Chapel* and *Keep the Widow Waking*). For many of these lost plays, popular pamphlets establish that their topic was probably a notorious actual murder, and this accounts for their suggested attribution to the domestic genre.⁵

With so many potential examples of the genre lost, with those surviving of unknown or collaborative authorship, without "great man" protagonists to compel interest of the traditional sort, and given the general sense that these were curiosities of a sensational and ephemeral nature, the domestic tragedies were critically scanted for decades. In 1943, however, Henry Hitch Adams attracted significant scholarly attention with his *English Domestic or, Homiletic Tragedy 1575 to 1642*. For Adams, the one "invariable" characteristic of the genre was the "humble station" of its protagonists, always "below the ranks of the nobility" (viii). This single criterion led him to consider plays more often thought of as Roman tragedies, chronicle histories, and comedies.⁶ Few critics have adopted his list whole, although many have followed Adams in including Thomas Heywood's *1 and 2 Edward IV* (1599) and Heywood's *English Traveller* (1633), if only because the Jane Shore plot of the former and the Geraldine plot of the latter are so analogous to his *Woman Killed with Kindness*.

At present, though, the plays most often discussed among the "domestic tragedies" are *Arden of Faversham*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, *1 and 2 Edward IV*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, and *The Witch of Edmonton*. *Othello*, too, is often mentioned in discussions of the genre as Shakespeare's nearest approach to the form.

Recent work recognizes the anachronism of Adams' assumption that the two terms "humble station" and "below the ranks of the nobility" are synonymous. *Arden of Faversham*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *A Woman Killed with Kindness* are largely populated with gentlemen and gentlewomen who, while certifiably "non-aristocratic," would never have been taken by their contemporaries to be "humble." The plays emphasize the wealth and status of their protagonists as landowners. Even *Arden* refers to its title character as a "gentleman of blood," thus elevating him above the taint of the "new" that pertained to his historical namesake. Of more "middling" stature are the merchant family of *A Warning for Fair Women*, the shopkeepers and apprentices in one of the *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, and the yeomen and servants of *The Witch of Edmonton*. Their humbler standing is underscored by a contrasting scene at Court in *Warning*, the second plot with wealthy landowners in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, and the local squire and declining gentry of *Witch*. Rank thus varies widely across the genre, but the domestic tragedies cohere in locating their protagonists in centers of their own authority and responsibility, their households. In fact, the import of social history may be that Adams got things exactly backwards. For him, the "lowly social station of the tragic protagonist" was the "*sine qua non*" which had a "natural

result”: “playwrights set the action of their plays in the family merely because their plots inevitably concerned the everyday problems of the ‘common’ hero” (1). It may be that the business of everyday life was more the *sine qua non*, and that stature was variable within certain nonaristocratic, above-the-poverty-line parameters.

The least persuasive of Adams’ theses has proven to be that regarding “homiletic tragedy.” He asserted that each plot follows a monotonous moralizing formula: sin is committed, it is discovered, and the sinners repent, are punished, and seek divine mercy. “As long as domestic tragedy concerned itself with the things of the next world rather than with the things of this,” wrote Adams, “it remained a subordinate genre,” failing to develop “a real tragedy expressive of the actual problems of the citizen of England” (1943, 189–90). The burden of the analogy between the Suttills and Ardens goes to suggest that Adams had too limited a view of the “actual problems” of early modern English men and women. With *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama*, Catherine Belsey showed how the dialogue that establishes the conflicted motivations and aspirations of the characters “invites a response which contradicts the play’s explicit project” (1985, 133). The play’s proliferating effects, in other words, are far more socially engaged than Adams allowed. In a growing body of scholarship, domestic tragedy has since proved itself to be a site in which historicist, feminist, and materialist approaches are profitably practiced.

Arden of Faversham

Arden of Faversham seems not to have had much sense of occasion about its own generic impertinence in violating the traditions of *de casibus* tragedy, which chronicled the fall of a great man, most often a king, and dealt with matters of state. Judging from the titles of such lost plays as the 1578 *History of the Cruelty of a Stepmother* and the 1579 *History of Murderous Michael*, *Arden* may have been preceded in generic innovation. If so, it is the first domestic tragedy merely by default, as the earliest to have survived. *Arden* is apologetic only in its Epilogue and then only in asking pardon for matters of style, not substance. The play is termed a “naked tragedy,” without “filed points” or “points of glozing stuff” – even though there is more-than-passable poetry in *Arden*’s sixth-scene report of a premonitory dream and Mosby’s eighth-scene recoil, Macbeth-like, from his own ambition. (For Jackson 2006 and others, the latter, “quarrel” scene is sufficiently fine to be attributable to Shakespeare.) But the Epilogue asserts that “simple truth” has no need of rhetorical ornament. To the extent that the Epilogue justifies the play, it does so on the basis of a truth claim: “Thus have you seen the truth of *Arden*’s death.”

Equally, however, *Arden* may not apologize for the “impertinence” of its content because it found no apology necessary. There was ample warrant in prevailing cultural constructs. The comprehensive logic known as analogical thought thoroughly enmeshed the fate of the state with that of each individual household. In their popular domestic treatise of 1598, *A Godly Form of Household Government*, John Dod and Robert Cleaver began: “A household is as it were a little commonwealth.” They echoed the conventional belief that any one sphere was analogous to all others, with each hierarchized in parallel ways. Thus, the head in the body was like the father in his household was like the king in his kingdom was like Christ in his Church. Analogical constructs combined the corporeal, the domestic, the political, and the divine into a single, satisfyingly complete worldview, and an event in one sphere could be understood to resonate in all others. Thomas *Arden*’s household, for example, was a microcosm of the kingdom.

During the sixteenth century, these principles of analogical thought were introduced into formulations of authority and obligation. Prevailing notions of obedience were premised on the fifth commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother." By analogy, the biblical injunction regarding a child's obedience to his or her parent could be understood to pertain to a subject's fealty to his or her monarch. While there were other justifications for state power in circulation, patriarchy was uniquely suasive, drawing as it did on the model of a social unit, the family, that was thoroughly naturalized and easily grasped. By picturing itself as a family writ large, the state appropriated the divine sanction of the Bible for its own authority and thus required obedience less in its own name than, it could suggest, God's (Schochet 1975; Sommerville 1986). Thus it was in the state's own interest to reinforce the analogies between itself and the private sphere, to make each realm conceptually dependent on the other.

This mutual imprinting of domestic and political spheres had the further effect of giving the state cause to concern itself with order in all households and to enjoin good domestic governance as a public duty. The strategies of state control played themselves out in many ways, one of which the historical case of Thomas Arden perfectly illustrates. If Arden's household was a little commonwealth, and if he was the head of this petty commonwealth, then defiance of his authority was comparable to rebellion against that of the king, and Alice and the other members of the Arden household who sought Arden's death were as much insurrectionaries as murderers. Indeed, while the greater number of the conspirators against the real-life Arden were convicted of homicide, his wife and two servants were found guilty of petty treason. By law, their punishments were particularly gruesome: Alice and a maidservant were burned at the stake, while Arden's manservant was hanged, drawn, and quartered.

The analogical worldview also informs *Arden of Faversham*, where the adulterous partnership of Alice and Mosby is shown to be emotionally troubled but politically purposeful. Alice resents Arden's "control"; what right has he "to govern me that am to rule myself?" (1.274, 10.85). Mosby is depicted as a usurper, seeking to secure "Arden's overthrow" and to best other aspirants to "Arden's seat," so that he may become "sole ruler of mine own" (8.30–6). Meanwhile, Greene's loss of tenure in lands seized by the Crown following the dissolution of the monasteries is transmuted from grievance against the king to grievance against Arden, the Crown's grantee: "Nor cares he though young gentlemen do beg" (8.476). Reede comes before Arden as a humble petitioner for another "plot of ground" (13.12). Both thus invest Arden with larger political attributes. Arden is so much the petty monarch in the little world of Faversham that he is also given a counselor, Franklin, the only fictional character added to this tale of true crime. In these ways, this "domestic" tragedy operates on principles analogous to those of state tragedy, and it is similarly occupied with issues of order and obedience.

The domestic tragedy looks less like state tragedy to modern audiences, living in an age in which the boundaries between private and public are differently drawn, than it would have done in its own time. One landmark dividing the early modern from the modern was the year 1828, when the old statute of treasons was finally abolished. The system of analogies had fallen away sufficiently that mariticide was thereafter understood to be murder, not petty treason. In 1831, J. P. Collier surveyed the Elizabethan drama with eyes no longer acculturated by a system of thought that had been deemed outmoded just three years earlier, and *Arden of Faversham* seemed sufficiently unlike the great orthodox tragedies that he developed the classification system that lastingly labeled it the "domestic." If, however, we recognize how much narrower the conceptual gap between the two forms of drama originally was, we come closer to understanding their cultural meanings in their own time.

Analogical thought is most familiar to us today as the doctrine outlined in E. M. W. Tillyard's highly influential *Elizabethan World Picture* (1959). In consequence of the pioneering materialist work of Jonathan Dollimore, we have learned to be skeptical of Tillyard's tidy formulations. It is important to recognize, as Dollimore certainly did, that this "metaphysic of order" was in wide circulation in the early modern period, as the statute of treasons confirms. What Dollimore importantly demonstrated, however, is that the Elizabethan "worldview" did not represent popular consensus about the nature of authority in the period. These doctrines would not have been endlessly repeated in sermons and homilies had they been as thoroughly naturalized as they liked to pretend; strategic and persistent reinforcement was necessary. The Janus faces of the "Elizabethan world picture" were critical to the domestic tragedy. On the one hand, analogical thought was so widely promulgated that it provided a conceptual structure for such plays. On the other hand, the application of analogical thought to doctrines of public order was never entirely successful, as both domestic tragedies and tragedies of state demonstrated. All drama required jeopardy and contestation to propel its action, and, however decorous its resolution, the greater part of a domestic play's "two-hours' traffic" enacted challenges to the prevailing metaphysic of order. It could scarcely help but be what Dollimore (1984) termed "radical tragedy," confronting its audiences with the disorder that ideology could never sufficiently contain.

The principal agent of disorder in *Arden of Faversham* is Alice Arden. The 1592 title-page of the play purports to show "the great malice and dissimulation of a wicked woman," a "disloyal and wanton wife." In the play, however, Alice maintains an oppositional self-representation. Enlisting an accomplice, for example, she complains of her husband that "he keep[s] in every corner trulls." She also charges that she has received from Arden "froward looks, / Hard words, and blows" (1.494–7). The play gives us no reason to find her allegations credible; Alice's rhetoric is the stuff of slander cases in church courts. There, most insults found expression in a sexual vocabulary that was, like a dead metaphor, detached from actual performance (Gowing 1996). In a similar manner, when her husband bridled at "boarding" first her mother and then her sister, Alice Suttill retorted that he spent more on keeping his whores than on her kin. She also claimed self-defense by describing actions taken out of fear of his "misuse ... both by words and stripes" – although no witness came forward to confirm that she was abused. Even if the self-justifications of these women had little credibility in their own contexts, they help us read the women outside those contexts. We cannot but wonder if Alice Suttill took in her mother and sister as a way of creating a female support system in her troubled household. And of course we bring different political sensibilities to Alice Suttill's insistence that "I will go where I list," even as to Alice Arden's declaration that she will not have her husband "govern me that am to rule myself" (10.85).

But this is to limit the radical ideological import of the play to the characterologic. *Arden of Faversham* enacts larger, systemic challenges to prevailing cultural constructs, and these are visible even when reading *with* the grain of the play. In its abstract outlines, analogical thought was tidy and comprehensive; in practical application, it was rife with what Alan Sinfield (1992) has called "faultlines." Some of the incapacities of doctrine are represented in the fact that Thomas Arden receives such bad advice from his good counselor, Franklin. When Arden confesses his fear that his wife may be straying, Franklin might be quoting a domestic conduct book in recommending that Arden travel to London for a period. Under Franklin's influence, Arden misguidedly cedes territory to his challenger; eventually, he recognizes that "that base Mosby doth usurp my room / And makes his triumph of my being thence" (4.29–30). The play is at least as much a contest for control of his little kingdom as for Alice's affections. This is a point made

in *Suttill contra Suttill*, too, as several witnesses paint verbal pictures of the emblematic moment when William Suttill was locked out of his own house, Alice having seized the advantage of her occupation of it.

In the proto-capitalist society of early modern England, the house was a more contested territory than prevailing ideology was prepared to admit. First, many households did not fit the notional norm, being headed by widows, single women, or what Bennett and Froide (1999) have termed “never-marrieds.” Second, even in households with the normative demographics, the economic reality was that many husbands worked away from home and most wives had active earning lives. We generally associate women with housekeeping, child-rearing, and consumption, but they were also engaged in production and entrepreneurship. They supervised servants, trained apprentices, maintained cottage industries, and interacted with the larger community. Political ideology did not acknowledge these female forms of social and economic power; its principal aim was to justify the monarchic form of government, and its project left no conceptual space for notions of shared governance and split authority. By persisting in formulating the household as a man’s kingdom-in-little, ideology rendered itself incapable of addressing many of the real features and challenges of daily life in early modern England. *Arden of Faversham* showed some of the fissures in the dominant belief system – ways in which the patriarchal center did not always hold – and so did the murder plays that followed it.

Domestic as Radical

A Warning for Fair Women is often coupled with *Arden of Faversham* because it, too, concerns a fatal triangle based in a historical event: the “most tragical and lamentable murder” of a London merchant, George Sanders, “acted” by George Browne and “consented unto” by his wife. In fact, *Warning* has less sensation value but may finally be a more subversive play. While members of the *Arden* audience would easily have identified with the emotions and contentions of its principal characters, few could have related to the more exotic elements of its plot: countless collaborators and go-betweens, murderers-for-hire, poisoned crucifixes and portraits. Alice Arden, memorably characterized in the nineteenth century as a “bourgeois Clytemnestra,” is one of the great over-reachers of Elizabethan drama, undoubtedly recognizable to her contemporaries in her desires but estranged from them by her actions. By contrast, *A Warning*’s Anne Sanders is thoroughly grounded in the everyday pursuits of purchasing linens and gloves, minding her credit, asserting authority over her servant, monitoring the contents of her fruit closet, and bantering with her son “sir sauce.” She is also an unimpeachably loyal wife, rebuffing George Browne when he accosts her. An outside agent, her neighbor Anne Drury, is required to effect her seduction, which is intellectual. Drury, feigning skill in palmistry, pretends to divine Anne Sanders’ fate: George Sanders will die and the young widow will marry the gentleman recently met. Once persuaded that Browne will be her next husband, Anne is readily convinced that she owes him anticipatory obedience. Drury effectively enacts in Anne Sanders’ private life the domestic analogue of the political formula “The king is dead; long live the king”: George Sanders is (soon to be) dead; long live George Browne. Anne Sanders’ unwilling complicity in murder thus follows from her deference to authority. Once on the slippery slope, however, Anne Sanders is then seen to slide so far as to deny her guilt. The play didactically details her doomed resistance, her eventual confession, and, finally, her pious admonitions as she faces the gallows. But the heavy-handed moralizing of this prolonged denouement cannot entirely erase the ideological

contestation entertained in the main action. Anne Drury appropriates the very principles of patriarchalism to leave Anne Sanders no ethical safe harbor.

Heywood's two plays on *Edward IV* pose similar challenges to conventional thought. These are nominally chronicle histories, but half their action concerns Edward's mistress Jane Shore, whose story unfolds like a domestic tragedy. Jane is a faithful wife to her goldsmith husband, Matthew, scrupulously attentive to her spousal responsibilities and reputation. When the king "besieges" her, however, she faces a crisis of authority. She is a subject in both domestic and political spheres, and the heads of the two spheres are in conflict. She can remain loyal to her husband and defy her king, or she can obey her king and betray her husband. Again, there is a neighbor of easier ethics, Mistress Blague, whose appetite for status and wealth serves to clarify for us Jane's earnest ambition to select the right moral course. Her choice is abrogated when the king "enforces" Jane's removal to court; even Matthew Shore then defers to royal authority. In time Richard III succeeds Edward IV on the throne and orders Jane's exile: "'tis the King's command she be held odious." But "The king of heaven commandeth otherwise," retorts one of the beneficiaries of her many good works (*Part Two*, 20.128–9). As she dies in a gutter ("Shoreditch" is here given a false derivation), Jane's final reconciliation with her husband is so heavily sentimentalized as to seem intended to be sympathetic. This is despite Heywood's claim, elsewhere, that her story shows those who are "unchaste" the "monstrousness of their sin." In fact, some fifteen years later a long poem named *The Ghost of Richard the Third* confirmed that the stage play that had increased Jane Shore's "fame" caused its audience to "commiserate her fate."⁷ Richard Helgerson called this "weeping for Jane Shore" (2000, 33); the prevailing metaphysic of order had not equipped her for the moral predicament she confronted.

The true-crime plot of Robert Yarington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, which is rooted in London's commercial culture of shopkeepers and tradesmen, involves the murder of chandler Thomas Beech by taverner Thomas Merry. A fictional companion plot, the murder of the orphan Pertillo by his uncle Fallerio, centers on wealthy Paduan landowners. The play advances by means of alternating scenes mediated by the bombastic choral figures Truth, Homicide, and – establishing a shared motive for these murders – Avarice. The London killing is a lurid one, with Merry striking Beech on the head with a hammer fifteen times, carving up his "body" onstage, toting the torso off to a ditch, and leaving the head and legs in a dark city corner for two watermen to trip over. Suspicious that Beech's shop assistant will identify him as the killer, Merry attacks the boy, thus producing one of the Elizabethan theater's more memorable stage directions: "Brings him forth in a chair, with a hammer sticking in his head" ([1601] 1913, sig. D3v). Catherine Richardson may have been the first to take this play seriously and with appreciation for the way it balances the "quodidian prosaicness of life" against the "outrageous physicalities of murder" (2006, 140). Stripped of the usual plot device of sexual intrigue, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also lays bare the political substructure of all these plays. Its unifying focus is on political subordinates and their ethical dilemmas. Merry's sister Rachel, an unmarried woman living in her brother's house and, thus, under his authority, is an unwilling accomplice. Her moral horror is movingly detailed, as is her unhappy decision that she cannot betray Merry. In the alternate plot, Allenso is appalled when his father, Fallerio, slays young Pertillo so that Allenso will inherit his cousin's estates, but he, too, reluctantly conceals the crime. He says tellingly that this is "obedience to unlawfulness" (sig. C2). Thus the submission mandated by conventional thought leads to immoral action, and in this way some of the incapacities of that thought are exposed.

The nameless Wife of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, a type of the Patient Grissell, faces none of the moral choices and quandaries of Anne Sanders, Jane Shore, and Rachel Merry. Instead the ethical

focus of this play is on her husband, also anonymous in the play but based on a Yorkshire squire who dispersed an ancient fortune on gambling and riotous living. With his sons impoverished and his brother imprisoned for his debts, the Husband finally recognizes that “That name, which hundreds of years has made this shire famous, in me and my posterity runs out” (4.75–7). Determining to spare his family further shame by murdering the members of his petty commonwealth – “Bleed, bleed rather than beg, beg. / Be not thy name’s disgrace” (4.105–6) – he succeeds in killing two of his three sons and injuring his wife and a servant. For such true crimes Frances E. Dolan has coined the term “petty tyranny” (1994, 89). In its closing passages, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* imputes the murders to demonic possession, but once again the moral tone of the conclusion cannot completely erase the many other meanings in play through earlier scenes. There, the Husband seemed to rebel against his own ideologically mandated authority, charging all his difficulties to “the very hour I chose a wife, a trouble, a trouble” (2.101–2) and to the responsibilities entailed by marriage and housekeeping. Although the Wife implausibly forgives all his crimes, there is little hope of divine mercy for the Husband. And there is no redemption for his radical resistance of his prescribed, patriarchal role.

The Witch of Edmonton addresses society’s harsh treatment of the elderly poor and bastard children, the unhappy consequences of betrothal negotiations and enforced marriages, and the competing belief systems of religion and magic. The title plot is based on the true trial of Elizabeth Sawyer for witchcraft. The second plot involves the fictional domestic tragedy of Frank Thorney. Thorney, an impoverished gentleman in service to Sir Arthur Clarington, believes that he has fathered a fellow servant’s unborn child. Sir Arthur requires Thorney to marry the pregnant Winifred. Meanwhile, Thorney’s father compels him to marry Susan, a wealthy yeoman’s daughter, in order to preserve the family estate. When Sawyer’s familiar, a devil dog, rubs against him, Thorney is inspired to find a terrible way out of the bigamy to which these conflicting imperatives have impelled him. He murders Susan. Like Sawyer, who uses a matrimonial language to describe herself as “enforced” to witchcraft by poverty and intolerance (2.1.14), Thorney is a victim of the community’s harsh moral economies. As do Allens and Rachel in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and the Wife of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, Thorney also suffers from the corruption of the ranking figure of his world-in-little. Good intentions find no purchase in Sir Arthur’s sphere of influence: Thorney’s sense of responsibility for Winifred is misplaced, because Sir Arthur is the true father of her child; Winifred cannot succeed in her earnest resolution to reform “From a loose whore to a repentant wife” (1.1.193); plain-speaking, direct-dealing Susan is murdered for no crime of her own. Even the intervention of the local magistrate, who eventually orders Sir Arthur to recompense Winifred with one thousand marks, is not restorative. As the Justice intones in the last line of the play, “Harms past may be lamented, not redressed” (5.3.170).

Thomas Heywood

With humble persons as well as gentle, factual plots and also fictional, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and *The Witch of Edmonton* represent more than one strain of the domestic tragedy. Attention to gender is another variable. The genre is often thought of as woman-centered; it certainly, as Belsey (1985) demonstrates, offered some strong female roles. But as it became less reportorial it also became more intensely engaged with the moral crises of men. The second part of *Edward IV* emphasizes that, like his wife, Matthew Shore faced a dilemma of irreconcilable choices, and Thomas Heywood’s later plays were increasingly male-focused.

Had their lost plays survived, we might have thought of Henry Chettle, John Day, Thomas Dekker, or William Haughton as the leading author of domestic tragedy. Perforce, the distinction now falls to Thomas Heywood. He wrote what is often agreed to be the most important example of the genre, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*.⁸ In each of its two fictional plots, the honor of a house is jeopardized. First, John Frankford welcomes a guest, Wendoll, who eventually seduces Frankford's pliant wife, Anne, and threatens the good order of his household. Second, Sir Charles Mountford incurs so large a debt to his enemy, Sir Francis Acton, that to repay it would cost him his estate and his gentility; instead, he offers to prostitute his loyal sister Susan to Acton. The play acknowledges Frankford's accountability in encouraging Wendoll "to be a present Frankford in his absence" (6.79). And Mountford's troubles are set in train when he kills two of Acton's servants during a hunting dispute. But *A Woman Killed* also strives mightily to persuade us that the subsequent corrective actions of these order figures are laudable. It terms Frankford "kind" because he does not murder or mutilate Anne. Instead, he exiles her. The members of the household who assemble to witness her expulsion include her children, servants Nicholas, Jenkin, Sisly Milk-Pail, and Spiggot, and also houseguest Cranwell; Frankford is particularly scrupulous to rescue the children from her "infectious thoughts" (13.127). Anne serves the play's moral message by thereafter refusing all sustenance and, on her deathbed, validating Frankford's actions. Similarly, Susan endorses the desperate measures her brother takes to salvage his estate. She plans to submit to rape but then kill herself. When Acton is moved instead to marry her, Mountford's tortured honor is presumably understood to be justified. Thus, in both plots, women's lives are sacrificed to the ethical trials of men whose honor is configured in the moral institution of the early modern household.

Much later, in the 1630s, Heywood revived the Frankford plot with variations that make even more clear how strained its value system was. *The English Traveller* is named for its protagonist, Geraldine, recently returned from a tour of Europe to find himself at the center of at least three affective triangles. First, the elderly Wincott competes so aggressively for Geraldine's allegiance that his own father, Old Geraldine, forbids his son to see Wincott. Geraldine betrays his father in a midnight meeting that Wincott casts as perfidious on his part, as well ("Nor can be ought suspected by my Wife, / I have kept all so private" (Heywood [1633] 1874, 68)). Second, Geraldine's return to England revives his former relationship with Wincott's Wife. The two pledge to reunite, but, in deference to Wincott, to wait until after his death to consummate physically what may nonetheless be seen as emotional disloyalty. Third, it develops that Geraldine's friend Delavill is also interested in Wincott's Wife, although these two do not delay their liaison. Their adultery is depicted, somewhat confoundingly, as a breach of Geraldine's trust rather than Wincott's, and the play insists that it finds a happy ending when Mistress Wincott conveniently expires from shame. She leaves a deathbed request that because Geraldine has been "each way noble" Wincott should "love him still," and Wincott enthusiastically pledges Geraldine in a "marriage of our love" (94). Because Wincott's lands will eventually enrich the Geraldine estate, even Old Geraldine is reconciled to what Wendy Wall (2002, 213) describes as a "newly consolidated homosocial imaginary."

Like the other domestic tragedies, Heywood's are occupied with the betrayal of traditional social contracts relating to marriage, service, and community. At issue also is the betrayal of a fading ideology. Heywood's moral universe was old-fashioned even as he replicated it on stage. As social and economic realities conspired to feminize the seventeenth-century household, he struggled to maintain his notion of it as a man's castle and fortress. The women of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and *The English Traveller* lack the agency and subjectivity that might have

made it more difficult for their protagonists to validate a male-centered worldview upon them. But it is precisely because state ideology endorsed this masculinist belief system that early modern households had meanings that were peculiar to their time. Holinshed's apology for including the Arden story was symptomatic of the cultural processes that would eventually trivialize the private sphere and, with it, women's lives. By the time Collier came to *Arden* and its fellows, "domestic" meant something far less "important" than had been true during the sixteenth century. As Stephen Orgel puts the later view, the generic label was "a backhanded compliment since tragedy really ought not to be domestic" (2002, 146).

Laughter, Tears, and Lived Experience

A Woman Killed with Kindness is in one of its aspects a serious tract on the erosion of old ideals of friendship and hospitality and the challenges of the new order of "companionate" marriage and household governance. There is a danger, though, of discussing these plays as if they were sociological treatises, to replicate the method of Henry Hitch Adams but with our guiding rubric switched from "homiletic" to "anxiety." Twentieth- and twenty-first-century productions have also emphasized the entertainment value of the domestic tragedies.

One consequence of *Arden's* care to develop characterologic density is that any one of a number of actors can steal the show.⁹ In 1925, William Poel dressed the title character in pink tights, "and it had the strange effect of showing perhaps what the man, Arden, might have been, as of some hidden frivolity in his nature, or some exquisite suppressed libido"; in Buzz Goodbody's 1970 production, Arden was by contrast "taut, cold and dangerous." For Joan Littlewood's 1954 version, Mosby was singled out for a "dark, cringing bravura." And Alice is often the star part, played as "a skittish voluptuary brimming with enormous passion she cannot understand" by Dorothy Tutin (for Goodbody) and, in an instance of celebrity casting, by Jenny Agutter (for Terry Hands in 1982). Hands staged the play in the Royal Shakespeare Company's Other Place, a reclaimed hut of corrugated tin. In scene 4, he had the villains Black Will and Shakebag circle the outside of the building noisily and threateningly, running metal implements against the metal walls. For the audience, locked in with the terrified soliloquizer Michael (played gripingly by Mark Rylance), Arden's servant was the play's Everyman and its most compelling character.

Polly Findlen's trivializing adaptation for the Royal Shakespeare Company (2014) was staged as a twenty-first-century farce, with Alice a high-heeled, tight-skirted Essex girl and Arden a cold-hearted schlockmeister. It is more common for modern productions to locate their comedy in the blundering hired guns Black Will and Shakebag, who are clobbered by a shop shutter, foiled by Michael's locked door, and stymied by heavy fog and their hapless fall into a ditch. At the Metropolitan Playhouse in 2004, however, Alex Roe's inspiration was to cast Chris Glenn as both Black Will (in his person) and Shakebag (in the form of his ventriloquized jester's marotte), and, while a fight scene "between" them made for brilliant physical comedy, other moments of dialogue showed how sinister the criminal lunacy of these "masterless men" can be – and may have been in the play's original incarnation.

On stage, the domestic tragedies profit from modulations of tone executed with the most delicate finesse, but then, so too do *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*. Laughter was a part of tragedies both orthodox and domestic. *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, for example, gives us not only the shop boy with a hammer sticking out of his head but also a neighbor who, when roused by the cry of

“Murther!” replies “What, would you have some Mustard?” (sig. C4). And, as a cast of *Woman Killed* characters gather at Anne Frankford’s deathbed to sigh “I’ll wish to die with thee,” the pugnacious Nicholas – Frankford’s household informant about her adultery – unsentimentally interjects “So will not I; / I’ll sigh and sob, but, by my faith, not die” (17.99–100).

For all this, there remains deep feeling in the portrayal of Rachel Merry, and, as suggested by another case from the Consistory Court of Canterbury, more serious meaning in Nicholas.¹⁰ In 1595, Robert Turner, a servant in the household of Thomas Cullen, described the day a fellow servant named Stephen Smyth feigned illness, took himself off to his chamber in the stables, and was joined there by his mistress, Mildred Cullen. Finding occasion to pass by the chamber, Turner observed the two in bed, Mildred Cullen with her clothes thrown up and Smyth with his breeches pulled down. Like Wendoll and Anne Frankford, they had taken advantage of the absence of their household’s head. The Cullen case also had its Cranwell, a houseguest named Michael Barber who joined a family card game and unhappily deduced the relationship between Mildred Cullen and Smyth. Catherine Wallup, the Sisly Milk-Pail of the Cullen household, was taken on as a servant on December 22, 1594, and she was quick to note that when Mildred Cullen prepared to go to the Canterbury Christmas market, Smyth’s hand slid high under her skirts as he helped her mount her horse. By then, it turns out, Thomas Cullen already knew of the affair, although in this case his informant is not named. Evidently anxious to avoid the confrontation Frankford engaged in, Cullen dismissed Smyth while Mildred was at the market.

The spitefulness of Turner’s testimony and the judgmentalism of various neighbors’ remarks fade away in the face of former servant Elizabeth Goldup’s quiet report. Her deposition suggests that Mildred and Smyth shared something more than sexual infatuation. After Cullen had settled down for the night, Goldup would regularly fetch Smyth into the main house, where he and Mildred would sit by the fire talking quietly. And, we learn, Mildred endured Smyth’s absence for but three days. On December 25, she walked out of the house, leaving the doors open behind her. Consistory Court depositions allow Mildred a subjectivity denied Anne Frankford, but the two women shared one tragic consequence of their actions. The justices of the peace intervened to require Mildred to leave her child with her husband. These were the human tragedies that brought private life to the early modern stage.

NOTES

- 1 Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library MS X.11.2, fols. 215–78 *passim*; and CCAL MS Y3.13, fol. 39. For an excerpt from the case, see the transcription in Orlin (2004). The case is also briefly discussed in O’Hara (2000).
- 2 Holinshed’s report of the Arden case is excerpted in Appendix II of Wine’s edition of the play (1973), from which I quote throughout this chapter.
- 3 Here and throughout, I rely on research conducted for my *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Orlin 1994).
- 4 The dates given generally refer to the first printing of a play. Each was probably written and performed some years earlier. Where a date is preceded by “c.,” however, the first printing is demonstrably late, and so a considered assumption is made about first performance.
- 5 Although Taylor opened this line of conjecture about lost plays, I am indebted here to Henry Hitch Adams’ Appendix A, “Lost domestic tragedies” (in Adams 1943).
- 6 Adams also considered R. B.’s *Appius and Virginia* (c.1564), Thomas Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus* (c.1600),

- the anonymous *Life and Death of Jack Straw* (c.1591), and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633).
- 7 Heywood alleges the moral efficacy of the theater in his *Apology for Actors* (1612, sig. G1v). See also Christopher Brooke, *The Ghost of Richard the Third* (1614, sig. F1). I owe the latter reference to Clark (1931, 16).
- 8 For more on *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, see Adam Zucker, Chapter 35 in this collection.
- 9 For the following discussion I am indebted to (and quote from) Wine's edition of *Arden* (1973, li–lvii). Reports from the 2004 and 2014 productions are from personal observation.
- 10 CCAL X.11.5, fols. 22–55 *passim*.

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Revenge Tragedy

Marissa Greenberg

In Act 5 of *The Tempest* (c.1611), Prospero instructs Ariel to “release” Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, and their attendants from “the line grove” where they are “all prisoners” (in Shakespeare 2008; 5.1.30, 10, 9). When these former inmates of Prospero’s arboreal prison come onstage, “They all enter the circle which Prospero had made, and there stand charmed” (5.1.57sd). Exactly when Prospero makes this circle is not indicated in the play-text. Also occluded is how Alonso and the others are positioned within the circle: do they stand individually or, as when they enter, is Alonso “attended by Gonzalo; Sebastian and Antonio[,] ... by Adrian and Francisco” (5.1.57sd)? Are they scattered randomly about or evenly fanned out? Do they face inward or outward? The positioning of the prisoners has implications for the jailor’s blocking. Does Prospero dash about within the circle, barely able to contain the “fury” that only moments before he denounced in favor of more compassionate “affections” (5.1.26, 18)? Or does he move steadily along the circle’s edge, his embodied motion expressing the “nobler reason” that inspires him to “forgive” his enemies (5.1.26, 78)? These performance matters have prompted various responses from modern directors and editors, but in Renaissance England they would have been resolved in part in accordance with the play’s form.

Form, which in this case may be loosely defined as the genres, conventions, and techniques that distinguish dramatic practice from other cultural practices, makes *The Tempest* a seemingly odd choice with which to begin a discussion of English revenge tragedy. After all, the play is categorized as a comedy in the 1623 Folio, as a romance in many collected works of Shakespeare since the nineteenth century, and as a tragicomedy in much modern criticism.¹ More to the point, the frustration of tragedy in *The Tempest* results in large part from Prospero’s express rejection of retributive violence: “Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th’ quick ... The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance” (5.1.27–8). Yet the play in performance discloses other contingencies, including playing space, acoustic technologies, stage properties, and, of particular interest, gestures. “Implying *organized* kinesics,” Carrie Noland explains, “[the term]

‘gesture’ serves as a reminder that movement is not purely expressive but is culturally shaped at every turn” (2009, 7; emphasis original). The stage image of Prospero making a magical circle, for instance, recalls the conjurations of Mak in *The Second Shepherds’ Play*, Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus, and Roger Bolingbroke in Shakespeare’s *2 Henry VI*, characters driven by a desire for wealth and power, not reconciliation. In each of these plays, form and performance mutually inform one another, constructing unique narrative structures and embodied effects.

The two-way traffic between form and performance appears boldly in the circular movements that appear time and again in English revenge tragedies. In his discussion of Renaissance tragedy, Michael Neill explicates revenge as an “attempt to revive and atone for the violated past, [which] finishes by re-enacting the crime of violation” (1997, 251). This looping action is evident in the “recursive symmetries” (Neill 2005, 336) that characterize English revenge tragedy as a genre: rhetorical tropes of repetition, juxtapositional staging, recurrent stage properties, and metatheatricality (e.g., Sofer 2003; Dessen 1995; Bate 1992). It is also evident in performance as recursive gestures, from routine activities, such as entering and exiting the stage, to intricate spectacles, like masques and other courtly entertainments. This recursivity extends beyond the stage, as well. In a rare example of consensus, both Renaissance English antitheatricalists and proponents of the stage held to the notion that form and performance move audiences, although they disagreed about whether this movement was beneficial or debilitating to individuals and society. Prospero’s circular motion in *The Tempest* enacts and revises – indeed, enacts the better to revise – the manifestation of form in and as performance in English revenge tragedy.

Return with a Vengeance

Return is the driving force of revenge and revenge tragedy. Some violation has upset the moral and social balance, and revenge functions as the mechanism by which society returns to law and order. It is in this sense of revenge that the Bible speaks of God’s vengeance (“To me belongeth vengeance and recompence” (Authorized Version, Deuteronomy 32:35); “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19)) and statutes of the state’s retribution. When divine or earthly authority is absent or corrupt, a convention in revenge tragedy, victims take it upon themselves to put the scales of justice back in balance by returning the initial crime upon their violators. In doing so, revengers “[put] the Law out of Office,” as Francis Bacon writes in his essay “Of Revenge” (1625, 19), thus perpetuating the exile of equity and equilibrium. Even when their violence restores justice and stability, revengers remain outlaws, never able to return to their place within the world that they repair.

English revenge tragedy enacts these figurative returns as physical movement within the fictional world of the play as well as in the actual playhouse (Greenberg 2015, ch. 2). Transforming the actor’s routine entrance and exit into a generic marker, many plays stage the revenger’s return as instigation or perpetuation of the revenge plot. Sons, siblings, and lovers, intent on revenge, come back from abroad (*Titus Andronicus* (c.1594), *Hamlet* (1600–1)), from war (*The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1587), *The Atheist’s Tragedy* (1609–10)), and in disguise (*The Tragedy of Hoffman* (1602), *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606)). However, the character of the ghost returned from the world of the dead most consistently embodies the movement of revenge tragedy.

A holdover from the Senecan tragedies on which many English dramatists modeled their plays, the ghost became a popular point of parody. In the Induction to the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women*, a personified Comedy describes Tragedy as a presentment of “A filthie whining

ghost, / Lapt in some foule sheet, or a leather pilch, / Comes screaming like a pigge half stickt, / And cries, *Vindicta, revenge, revenge!*" (1599, sig. A2v). This mocking account is striking, first, for its early date: *A Warning for Fair Women* was printed in 1599 but may have been staged as early as the mid-1580s, only about a decade after the opening of London's first commercial theater; second, for its emphasis on material presence: the ghost may don a sheet (like the fake ghost in *The Atheist's Tragedy*), or a leather coat, or, as in *Hamlet*, full armor; and third, for its attention to bodily activity: the ghost "Comes" and "whin[es]," "scream[s]," and "cries," terms that – especially given the self-conscious theatricality of this Induction – function as much as cues for performance as descriptions of form. Within the dramatic fictions of plays such as *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594), *The Tragedy of Locrine* (1595), and *Antonio's Revenge* (c.1602), ghosts come back from the world of the dead and call out for retributive justice. In performance, the actors who play these ghosts come onstage, that is, enter, and deliver their lines, perhaps histrionically: "*Three ghosts crying Vindicta*" (Peele 1594, sig. B2v); "*Revenge, revenge for blood ... Vindicta, vindicta!*" (*The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine*, 1595, sig. E3v); "*Antonio, revenge! ... Revenge my blood!*" (Marston [c.1602] 1997, 3.2.34, 37).

In these ghostly visitations, the principal target of parody and/or homage is Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Theatrical London's "first blockbuster," *The Spanish Tragedy* returned repeatedly throughout the period in revivals and revisions (Calvo 2012).² It also returned in numerous other English revenge tragedies that explicitly echo Kyd's play or implicitly disclose its influence. *The Spanish Tragedy* begins with the return of the Ghost of Don Andrea, "a courtier in the Spanish court" (Kyd [c.1587] 2014, 1.1.4) who dies in battle. In the play's opening speech, the Ghost describes his "passage" (1.1.17) from the world of the living to the world of the dead. At the gates of hell, a debate ensues about whether to send Andrea's Ghost to "our fields of love" or "martial fields" (1.1.42, 47), which concludes that Pluto must decide his fate. "To this effect my passport straight was drawn" to Pluto's court, the Ghost explains, where Proserpine pairs him with Revenge who "lead[s him] through the gates of horn, / Where dreams have passage in the silent night" (1.1.54, 82–3). The Ghost's repeated references to "pass[ing]," "passage," and "passport" (see also 1.1.19, 28, 31, 35), which call attention to his physical movement through the pagan underworld that his exposition creates, imply a linear and unidirectional trajectory. Such verbal repetition is characteristic of English revenge tragedy, mirroring plot with words. Kyd doubles down on this rhetorical trope by glossing passage as return, a movement of there-and-back-again, and pairing it with enacted recursive motion.

Andrea's Ghost never comes onstage crying "Vindicta!" but remains physically in the world of the dead. Yet in effect he returns to the world of the living. His passage through the underworld culminates where he observes the truthful vision of "the author of [his] death, – / Don Balthazar ... / Deprived of life by Bel-Imperia," Andrea's beloved (1.1.87–9). This vision is the product of Revenge, who operates on the model of action-at-a-distance, effecting retributive violence through his preternatural influence (see Floyd-Wilson 2013). As Revenge explains when the Ghost chides him for dozing while Andrea's killer appears to get away (again) with murder, "though I sleep, / Yet is my mood soliciting their souls" (3.15.19–20), referring to the revengers Bel-Imperia and Hieronimo, whose son, Horatio, is also murdered by Balthazar and Lorenzo, Bel-Imperia's brother.

In Horatio's return, Kyd creates the worldly counterpart to the Ghost's otherworldly return. After Andrea's death, Horatio challenges Balthazar to single combat and takes him prisoner, then performs the funeral rites that allow his friend's spirit to pass through the underworld. The play shows Horatio coming back in triumph: he enters the city with his prisoner, "pass[es]

by” the king in triumphal procession, then “march[es] once more about these walls” (1.2.110sd). Here, Horatio’s return is enacted as passage over the stage – not once but twice. In addition to circling the metropolis, Horatio passes through Spain’s halls of power, his father’s garden, and, in the final scene, the Court theater, where Hieronimo hangs up his son’s body in the same manner as he found it in his garden. Meanwhile, the Ghost of Andrea, still sitting and watching at the gates of horn, comments on the apparent progress of revenge.

This juxtaposition of space and movement produces what Lorna Hutson calls “dramaturgy of the *mistakable* [sign],” which operates as “a metaphor for the weighing of alternatives, for reasoning probability, for decision making, and for plotting a course of action” (2007, 278; emphasis original). This dramaturgy is not exclusively figurative; it is also embodied. Even as the performance of motion through otherworldly and worldly spaces materializes the fantasy of revenge as return, it discloses the epistemological difficulty of this fantasy. As a concept, revenge promises a circular itinerary, as suffering and pain regress along the course plotted by the progress of the initial violation. English revenge tragedy reveals that the course of revenge is rarely so singular and measured. Instead, the plays trace a helical path that spirals out of control. To come “back with a vengeance,” as the colloquialism goes, is to surpass the point of origin.

Once revenge exceeds the initial offense, the question becomes “where will it end?” – a question that applies to both its locational culmination and its moral and social purpose. The influence of *The Spanish Tragedy* on English revenge tragedy is evident in its pairing of the rejection of ancient tragedy’s “epistemological determinism” (Semenza 2010, 154) and recursive gestures that stage this generic innovation. The problems of passing judgment and the physical passage of return reappear in the final scene of *The Spanish Tragedy* when Andrea’s Ghost passes sentence on his violators. Retracing the judicial topography of the underworld, the Ghost “doom[s]” his killer and his fellows to “endless pains,” “endless moan,” and “endless flames” (4.5.30, 34, 40, 43). Revenge authorizes this “endless tragedy” (4.5.48) in the closing line, thus ensuring the offenders’ suffering in perpetuity. To the extent that *The Spanish Tragedy* raises but does not resolve whether repeated torments in “deepest hell” (4.5.27) are equivalent to justice or qualify as stability, the play itself enacts an endless tragedy.

Choreographing Revenge

In *Hamlet* Polonius announces the players’ arrival, describing them as “The best actors in the world, for tragedy, ... tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral” (2.2.397–9). Polonius does not mention revenge tragedy, for the simple reason that this rubric is an invention of early twentieth-century formal criticism. For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, revenge plays were simply tragedies. Even as Polonius’ list of dramatic kinds calls attention to the historical specificity of genre, his emphasis on the players’ superlative skill – “Seneca cannot be too heavy,” he insists (2.2.400) – points up the significance of performance to Renaissance English understandings of form. The circular movements cued in many plays categorized as revenge tragedies endorse the construction of a subset of tragedy even as they demand a definition of genre that takes account of gesture. The recursive movements of actors onstage are as crucial to the form of English revenge tragedy as the narrative cycle of retributive violence.

John Marston’s *Antonio’s Revenge* realizes the full and varied implications of revenge tragedy’s enactment of the conventional rejection of sanctioned legal processes and embrace of, in Francis Bacon’s phrase, “Wilde Iustice” (1625, 19). The play (itself a sequel) redeploys stage

images and language from earlier revenge tragedies, especially *The Spanish Tragedy*, to track vengeance's circuitous course. The play begins where Marston's tragicomic *Antonio and Mellida* (1599) leaves off, with Piero Sforza, the Duke of Venice, still intent on exacting vengeance upon Andrugio, the former Duke of Genoa and Antonio's father. Piero enters "unbraced, his arms bare, smeared in blood, a poniard in one hand, bloody" (1.1.0sd), having just killed Felice, whose body, "stabbed thick with wounds, appears hung up" (1.2.192sd) in a manner that recalls the display of Horatio's corpse. More broadly, Piero's entrance evokes emblematic images of Revenge bearing a knife, the favorite weapon of dramatic revengers (Kiefer 2003). This weapon reappears in the scene of Felice's burial, when his father, the eponymous Antonio, and a third would-be revenger dig a grave "with their daggers" (4.2.87sd), the self-same instruments "that shall dig the heart, / Liver and entrails of the murderer" (4.2.86–7). These narrative, theatrical, and dramaturgical recyclings compound the effects of literal cyclical motion in Marston's presentation of the undertaking and execution of vengeance.

Antonio's Revenge stages the vow to revenge as an embodied circle. To render the trio of would-be revengers "stiff and steady in resolve," Antonio proposes, "Let's thus our hands, our hearts, our arms involve" (4.2.109–10). A stage direction then indicates, "They wreath their arms" (4.2.110sd). Still in this posture the revengers promise to take vengeance: "Now swear we by this Gordian knot of love," Felice's father says, to "sit as heavy on Piero's heart, / As Aetna doth on groaning Pelarus" (4.2.111, 115–16). Like this odd conjunction of classical myths, the meaning of which is nonetheless clear, the revengers' bodies create a shape that is both convoluted and resonant. The revengers are so inextricably entangled, in fact, that they literally do not (cannot?) unknot their bodies onstage but exit with "their arms wreathed" (4.2.118sd). On the level of narrative structure, this moment enacts the unbreakable quality of the vow to revenge. Nothing will slacken the revengers' commitment to complete the cycle of violence by punishing Piero in a manner that returns his crimes upon him. In terms of performance, however, the stage image of three actors exiting arm in arm (in arm) is potentially ridiculous, inciting laughter rather than compassion.

The juxtaposition of signification within the fiction (the adamant fellowship of violence) and the impact of embodied performance (the actors' contorted posture) is of a piece with Marston's experimentation with form in *Antonio's Revenge*. Some scholars take Marston at his word when he describes the play in the Prologue in conventionally tragic terms, dismissing "from our black-visaged shows" all those playgoers "within this round / Uncapable of weighty passion" (Pro. 20, 13–14). Others are inclined to understand *Antonio's Revenge* – with its unspeakable language and over-the-top theatrical allusions – in terms of Marston's satirical opus (Loewenstein 2002; Baines 1983). These critical positions need not be at odds. In *Antonio's Revenge* gesture participates in a concerted experiment with the structures and efficacies of genre.

This experimentation is also evident in the circular movements that accompany Marston's staging of the cyclical violence of revenge. Antonio's revenge begins with the killing of Piero's son, Julio. Antonio stabs Julio repeatedly – "thus, thus, / And thus I'll punch it [i.e., his heart]" (3.2.183–4). Then, he "mangle[s]" Julio's dead body (3.2.202), before ritualistically scattering the remains:

Ghost of my poisoned sire, suck this fume;
To sweet revenge, perfume thy circling air
With smoke of blood. I sprinkle round his gore,
And dew thy hearse with these fresh-reeking drops.
(3.2.207–10)

The language of “circling” and “round” in these lines suggests actual bodily movement onstage.³ Marston’s rhetoric indicates that the actor playing Antonio walks in a circle as he sprinkles blood and possibly other gory bits into the air, on his father’s tomb, and on the ground in a macabre ring. This ghastly scene illustrates Rick Bowers’ comparison of Marston’s techniques in the play to the Theater of the Absurd and Brechtian alienation (2000, 21, 24). But it also contributes to the reason some literary scholars and theater practitioners condemn *Antonio’s Revenge* as an ugly play, or, worse, ignore it (Scott 2000). Especially when performed by the prepubescent actors of Paul’s Boys, Marston’s enactment of revenge risks moving playgoers to disgust. Citing the same overleaping of generic convention and theatrical taste that leads some critics to claim *Antonio’s Revenge* to be ahead of its time or opposed to our own, Jonathan Dollimore (1984, ch. 2) puts the play on his short list of Radical Renaissance tragedies. Yet as Matthew Steggle (2012) has argued, Marston is very much of his time. Indeed, in its calls for circular movement, *Antonio’s Revenge* discloses a profound investment in Renaissance English theatrical and cultural trends.

This investment includes the dancing of a Court masque. Masques appear at the end of many revenge tragedies: *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, ascribed to Thomas Middleton; George Chapman’s *The Revenge of Bussy D’Ambois* (1609–10); John Fletcher, Francis Beaumont, and Philip Massinger’s *The Tragedy of Thierry and Theodoret* (1621); John Ford’s *The Broken Heart* (1629); and Marston’s own *The Malcontent* (1604), which narrowly avoids becoming a revenge tragedy. The dancing in *Antonio’s Revenge* exemplifies the importance of this convention specifically because it reinforces in bodily motion the circular action that structures narratives of revenge. Predicated on disorder in the heavenly sphere and the monarch’s sphere of influence, English revenge tragedy brings the choreography of the Court masque into the service of restoring justice and stability.

In the final scene of *Antonio’s Revenge*, the conspirators enter “in masquery” and “stand in rank for the measure” (5.3.33sd, 37sd). As dance historian John Ward explains, “each dance [in the masque proper, as opposed to the social dancing, or revels,] was a *measure* as the English understood the term; not a galliard, coranto, or other dance type that could be performed to any music in the appropriate rhythm and style, but a unique combination of steps and notes” (1988, 113). From the few extant detailed accounts of the measure, Robert Mullally concludes that its steps “were very few and very easy, but they were deployed in different ways so as to achieve constantly varying patterns of movement and changes of place and of direction, thus producing the features that were typical of the form” (1994, 427). This intricate choreography signified “metaphysical and moral realities,” as Thomas Greene observes in his discussion of the labyrinth dances popular on the Continent in the sixteenth century and that became a dominant courtly aesthetic in seventeenth-century England (2001, 1456). Both “the *raison d’être*” and “centrepiece” of the highly symbolic Court masque (Butler 2014), dancing enacted the monarch’s rightful place in a divinely ordered universe. Whereas the apparently haphazard movement of celestial bodies troubles this signification, “dancing ... perpetuates, or even induces an order that ensures by magical correspondence the pervasive concord of all things,” especially when it “finds a way to incorporate the turn, the doubling back, in its sinuous windings and interlacings” (Greene 2001, 1448). The physical and symbolic design of the measure bears directly on the meaning of recursive movement in English revenge tragedy.

In *Antonio’s Revenge* the dancing of “The measure” (5.3.49sd) becomes a choreographic trope for revenge tragedy by performing the form’s fantasy of cyclical return. The final scene presents the celebration of Piero’s marriage to Maria, Andrugio’s widow and Antonio’s mother. Piero invites the revengers, who have entered in disguise as masquers, to “[give] grace / To curious feet that in proud measure pace” (5.3.43–4). Antonio asserts, “Then will I dance and whirl about

the air. / Methinks I am all soul, all heart, all spirit" (5.3.47–8). None in the courtly audience expresses surprise at the performance, indicating that Antonio's "whirl[ing]," "air[y]," and "spirit[ed]" dance is not disorderly or devilish, as is the grotesque dancing of witches, sprites, and other demonic figures in antimasques. Instead, he fulfills Piero's request for a measure that is "grace[ful]," "proud," and "curious," meaning "elaborate, intricate, strange, ingenious" (Greene 2001, 1451).⁴

At first blush, the measure imposes a sense of proportion and harmony on the revengers' wild justice. Yet Marston turns this choreography to new purpose in the violent motions with which *Antonio's Revenge* concludes. In a sequence that recalls *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, Antonio and his fellow revengers bind Piero, cut out his tongue, and reveal that he has dined upon his son's body. Then, as they advance to kill him, stage directions indicate a Gordian-knot-like pattern of turns and returns evocative of Renaissance labyrinth dances. Initially, the revengers move in unison: "They offer to run all at Piero"; however, "on a sudden [they] stop" (5.3.105sd). Ostensibly in order to prolong their victim's death, the revengers do not strike together but one after the other "stabs Piero," before "They all run at Piero with their rapiers" (5.3.109sd, 111sd). Although this action may have been performed in multiple ways, the revengers likely formed a circle around Piero before stepping in to stab him, first individually and then collectively. This blocking makes practical sense on the limited stage-space of Paul's playhouse. Furthermore, to the extent that this blocking replicates the steps of the measure, it does not require the boy actors to memorize two sets of "curious" choreography. This blocking also works in conjunction with the dramatic narrative by acting out and producing the cosmic order that Piero's crimes put awry and the revengers' violence restores. In his recycling of the movements of the measure, Marston offers a full expression of the imbrication of form and performance in English revenge tragedy.

Whereas elsewhere in *Antonio's Revenge* circular movements contribute to Marston's lampooning of English revenge tragedy, the recursive motions in the play's final scene perform the form's fantasy of return. Within the dramatic fiction, Antonio receives thanks for "riding huge pollution from our state," and the revengers announce they "will live enclosed / In holy verge of some religious order" (5.3.129, 149–50). Both the law's violator and the outlaws who punish him are removed from society, which may return to a state of justice and stability. In the theatrical performance, genre and gesture also correspond, albeit with a difference. If earlier in the play, members of the audience "pant within this ring," it may be because they feel their "heart[s] / Pierced through with anguish" (Pro. 22–3), or perhaps laughter, disgust, or the breakneck speed with which one act of violence follows upon another simply leaves them breathless. And at the end of the play, any "pant[ing]" may be a result of playgoers' vicarious participation in the turns and returns of the dancers onstage. As we will see, this notion of contagious corporeality, according to which actors' movements physically move audiences and vice versa, was crucial to both tragedy's advocates and its opponents.

Contagion and Cure

In *An Apology for Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney writes that "the high and excellent tragedy openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue ... that maketh us know '*Qui sceptrā saevus duro imperio regit, / Timet timentes, metus in auctorem redit*'" (The savage tyrant who wields his scepter with a heavy hand fears the timid, and fear returns to its author) ([1595]

1992, 152). Here Sidney conjoins medicinal-moral interpretations of Aristotelian tragedy popular on the Continent and political-legal interpretations that would come to dominate English understandings of *catharsis*. At the same time, his language of opened wounds and exposed ulcers and his assertion that tragedy terrorizes tyrants suggests that tragedy may harm rather than heal, madden instead of mend. Critics of revenge tragedy expressed this very concern. In his preface to *Seneca his Tenne Tragedies*, for example, Thomas Newton explains “some squeamish Areopagites” worry the plays’ representations of “cruelty, . . . incontinency, and . . . tyranny, can not be digested without great danger of infection” (1581, sig. A3v). This discourse of bodily disease, however, became the platform on which revenge tragedy was defended as curative. Tanya Pollard (2005) has shown that like the poisons in folk and Paracelsian medicine that cure through similitude, revenge tragedy was believed to return the bodies of both individual playgoers and civil society to health – albeit at a cost. Within the dramatic fiction, revengers become similar to their violators in recreating the initial crimes, and at the end of the plays they die along with the criminals, leaving the community more healthful for this purgation. Of course, innocents also die in these plays, thus “destroying as it cures” (Pollard 2005, 69). As Newton’s rehearsal of attacks against Senecan tragedy implies, revenge tragedy risks poisoning audiences, both “guilty” and “free” (*Hamlet*, 2.2.564). Indeed, the *reditus*, or return, that Sidney describes is especially appropriate to revenge tragedy, in which recursive movement manifests generically and gesturally.

John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613–14) enacts this conjunction of contagion and cure, and its effects within the dramatic fiction and the actual playhouse. Although no character dies from poisoning, as a false accusation of tainted apricots highlights, the language of poison abounds in Webster’s play. Many English dramatic revengers favor poison second only to Revenge’s emblematic knife. It is poured in ears, down throats, and through wounds (*Hamlet*); characters ingest it from pictures (as in Webster’s *The White Devil* (1612)), skulls (*The Revenger’s Tragedy*), chalices (*Women Beware Women* (c.1621)), and even a skull that serves as a chalice (William D’Avenant’s little-known but fascinating *The Tragedy of Albouine, King of the Lombards* (1629)). In these plays, poison works invisibly, circulating through the body with little sign of its efficacy. In *The Duchess of Malfi* poison works even more mysteriously: like a contagion, it skips and leaps from body to body; like revenge, it moves by turns and returns.

This complex movement is established in the opening scene of *The Duchess of Malfi*. The Duchess’ steward, Antonio Bologna, who has recently arrived from France, praises its king for

Considering duly that a prince’s court
 Is like a common fountain, whence should flow
 Pure silver drops in general; but if ’t chance
 Some cursed example poison ’t near the head,
 Death, and diseases through the whole land spread.
 And what is ’t makes this blessed government,
 But a most provident Council, who dare freely
 Inform him the corruption of the times?
 Though some o’ th’ court hold it presumption
 To instruct princes what they ought to do,
 It is a noble duty to inform them
 What they ought to foresee.

(1.1.11–22)

In its account of effective monarchy, Webster's play recalls Sidney's defense of tragedy as medicinal and political, both a cure for social ills and a counselor to kings. *The Duchess of Malfi* seems intent on fulfilling this bifold function in its representation of the Duchess, whose noble death in the face of tyranny offers a model of female and princely virtue. In the process of mounting this laudable portrait, the play rehearses and revises the recursive motions of English revenge tragedy, beginning with Antonio's physical "return" (1.1.2) and culminating in the representation of vengeance as a fatal disease.

The Duchess' vow of marriage unintentionally instigates the revenge plot that eventually culminates in her death. This vow, like the vows of revenge in earlier plays, involves images of circular movement. The Duchess gives Antonio her wedding ring to "help" – that is, to cure – his bloodshot eye, then places it on his finger to rid it of the "devil . . . dancing in this circle [i.e., the ring]" (1.1.400, 402–3). The verbal contract that follows, which is witnessed by Cariola, the Duchess' "counsel" (1.1.467; see Dunn 2002), simultaneously recalls and inverts the staging of revenge in other English revenge tragedies:

Duchess Bless, heaven, this sacred Gordian, which let violence
Never untwine!

Antonio And may our sweet affections, like the spheres
Be still in motion.

(1.1.470–3)

In *Antonio's Revenge* the revengers' corporeal Gordian knot risks making a travesty of vow-taking, and their deadly measure, which evokes the motions of the spheres, imposes resolution on the problematic returns of retributive violence. By contrast, in *The Duchess of Malfi* these movements enact distinctly un-revenge-like sentiments and movements. "This sacred Gordian" refers explicitly to the Duchess and Antonio's marriage, but it also points to the lovers' embrace cued only moments earlier in the phrase "this circumference" (1.1.459). The reference to celestial motion echoes the conventional language of marriage celebration and puns on an earlier reference to the "discord" (1.1.459) that exists outside their circle of two: as an acoustic term, "discord" is an antonym to harmony, which in the Ptolemaic universe resounds from the revolutions of celestial bodies. The same stage imagery that in Marston's play resolves the revenge plot sets revenge in motion in Webster's play.

Unaware of the marriage of his sister, the Duchess, Ferdinand learns from his spy, Bosola, that she has given birth to a child. Bosola's letter works like a poison, infecting its reader:

Rhubarb, O, for rhubarb,
To purge this choler!
.
Apply desperate physic –
We must not now use balsamum, but fire,
The smarting cupping-glass, for that's the mean
To purge infected blood, such blood as hers.

(2.5.12–13, 23–6)

Ferdinand contracts this dis-ease not solely from Bosola's intelligence but also from his own imaginings:

Methinks I see her laughing,
Excellent hyena! Talk to me somewhat, quickly,
Or my imagination will carry me
To see her in the shameful act of sin.

(2.5.38–41)

Recalling the anxieties of Newton's "squeamish Areopagites," Ferdinand is unable to "digest" the image of his sister's "incontinency" and thus risks "infection." His other sibling, the Cardinal, warns Ferdinand against this inordinate response to their sister's apparent betrayal and urges him to temperance:

There is not in nature
A thing that makes man so deformed, so beastly,
As doth intemperate anger.

.
Come, put yourself
In tune.

(2.5.56–8, 61–2)

The Cardinal's words resonate with the manner and effects of Ferdinand's revenge in the ensuing action. Ferdinand's express purpose is to put the Duchess out of "tune," but he ends up advancing his own "beastly" deformity.

As Ferdinand attempts repeatedly to "plagu[e the Duchess] in art" (4.1.111), the play enacts the uncontrollable recursivity of revenge. Ferdinand presents the Duchess with a dead man's hand, lifelike sculptures of her children's and husband's corpses, and her own coffin, and, in a striking use of the measure as a choreographic trope of revenge, an antimasque of madmen. The Duchess is told that Ferdinand intends this "wild object" – which includes a song "to a dismal kind of music," lunatic dialogue about damnation, sex, and potions, and "danc[ing] ... with music answerable thereunto" – to "cure" her melancholy (4.2.41, 61sd, 110sd, 43). However, his true purpose is to "[bring] her to despair" (4.1.116). Despite this onslaught of sound, sight, and movement, the Duchess maintains her physical and spiritual health. In the play's most famous line, she asserts "I am Duchess of Malfi still" (4.2.134). She dies as the Duchess of Malfi as well: nobly, orderly, and, as when she and Antonio exchanged vows, kneeling. When her spirit returns, it is not as a ghost intent on revenge but as a disembodied echo that urges Antonio to flee. Instead, Ferdinand is overwhelmed by melancholy and madness, as his tyrannical art returns, boomerang-like, to plague him. The sight of the Duchess' corpse infects Ferdinand to fatal effect: he contracts "A very pestilent disease ... lycanthropia," which causes "those that are possessed with 't ... to imagine / Themselves to be transformed into wolves" (5.2.5–6, 8–10). The Duchess' haunting presence in *The Duchess* may have a similarly "toxic effect" on playgoers, as Ellen MacKay has argued (2011, 134). Or, like Antonio's return and the Duchess' ring, it may restore them to collective and individual health. Combining the cyclical gestures and effects of English revenge tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi* presents contagion and cure as two sides of the same uncontrollably spinning coin of the genre in form and performance.

Coming Back for More

The recursive movements that characterize English revenge tragedy are crucial to the operations of Renaissance theater more generally. As Bruce Smith writes, "For Shakespeare and his contemporaries impersonation, choreography, and excitation of the imagination were alike in one fundamental way: they all involved motion" that "connect[ed] actors with physical space with audience with actors." Movement in the Renaissance English playhouse was more than "just a matter of blocking," Smith alerts us: "Rather, the entire space within the wooden O needs to be

imagined as full of movement. That motion begins in the will of actors, it radiates through sound waves and eye beams into the ambient air, it reaches its object in spectators/listeners, whose own e-motions return to the actors onstage" (2004, 147). The motions and emotions that Smith describes passing from actors to playgoers and back again differed according to a play's genre. English revenge tragedy makes the most of this dynamic in its performances of physical return, circular choreography, and contagious effects.

The significance of these movements for English revenge tragedy, in turn, is illuminated by their appearance in other kinds of plays, such as *The Tempest*. Whereas near the end of Shakespeare's play making a circle accompanies Prospero's vow to repudiate revenge and thus enacts the turn away from tragedy, elsewhere in *The Tempest* cyclical narrative elements and embodied movements evoke English revenge tragedy. The opening storm recreates the perilous journey that brought Prospero and Miranda to the island. Just as Antonio's "ministers" "hoist[ed] us, / To cry to th' sea that roared to us, to sigh / To the winds, whose pity sighing back again, / Did us but loving wrong" (1.2.131, 148–51), Prospero subjects the king's ship to "roar[ing]" waves (1.1.17, 1.2.2) that are not allayed by Miranda's sighs and "piteous heart" (1.2.14). And just as "Providence divine" delivered Prospero and Miranda to the island, "bountiful Fortune . . . hath [his] enemies / Brought to this shore" (1.2.179–81). Prospero takes his enemies' repetitive maritime itinerary as an opportunity to set in motion his revenge by returning upon them the direful conditions of his sea voyage a dozen years earlier.

Also like English revenge tragedies, *The Tempest* undermines any straightforward correlation between return and revenge. The entertainment that Prospero conjures to celebrate Miranda and Ferdinand's betrothal includes dancing nymphs and reapers, whose "country footing" (4.1.138) indexes the popularity of country dances in Jacobean masques (Mullally 1994, 419). The spirits' steps ought to enact the goddesses' blessings of marital harmony and fecundity. Instead, they cause Prospero to remember the "foul conspiracy . . . Against [his] life" (4.1.139–40). Something about the choreography recalls Caliban's design to exact "Revenge" upon the "tyrant," Prospero (3.2.53, 41). Upon recalling this "plot" against his life, Prospero brings the dancing to an abrupt end and dismisses Miranda and Ferdinand, explaining, "a turn or two I'll walk, / To still my beating mind" (4.1.141, 162–3). The play-text is as elusive about the manner and duration of Prospero's physical and mental "turn[ing]" as it is about his magical circle in the final act. Here too it is unclear whether the moment in performance enacts a calming of the passions or a tenuous control of response. Regardless of the staging, this sequence of action and reaction reveals the impact of the spirits' "graceful dancing" (4.1.138sd). In the manner of Sidneian tragedy, it returns fear upon the tyrant; yet it does not reform Prospero, who proceeds to execute further violence. Prospero orders his spirits to "plague" (4.1.192) the would-be murderers with bodily pains – "grind their joints / With dry convulsions, [and] shorten up their sinews / With aged cramp" (4.1.260–2) – that promise to induce awkward, contorted movements like those of the dancing of an antimasque. In the dancing of the measure, Prospero sees not a fulfillment of the masque form but an impending tragedy – and a revenge tragedy to boot.

The masque constitutes, in fact, an encore performance of an earlier impersonation of Revenge. When summoning this courtly entertainment, Prospero calls for "such another trick" (4.1.37) as Ariel's enactment of a harpy, the mythological creature of vengeance. The impersonation touches Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio's "great guilt," which Gonzalo likens to "poison" (3.3.105–6). This poison causes "distractions," "fits," and "desperat[ion]" (3.3.90, 91, 105), and it soon spreads, contagion-like, touching guilty and innocent alike. First, it infects "the good old lord Gonzalo," who swells with "sorrow and dismay" at the sight of the others' suffering (5.1.14–15);

next, the spirit Ariel, who describes how “strongly [Prospero’s art] works ‘em,” and imagines the effect on his “affections,” “were [he] human” (5.1.17–19); and finally, Prospero, who, after listening to Ariel’s account, decides to “restore” his enemies to physical and mental well-being rather than ravish them further (5.1.31). Significantly, it is not Ariel’s account of Prospero’s enemies’ suffering that affects the former Duke of Milan; rather, the spirit’s movement moves him:

Hast thou, which are but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
(5.1.21–4)

Prospero’s response reveals revenge to be not simply a literal poison and physic but a matter of form and performance, as well. Within the dramatic fiction of *The Tempest*, vengeance circulates around the physical space of the island, where it affects Prospero’s enemies, his chief actor, and the dramatist himself. So, too, in the theater the play presumes a capacity to move playgoers to compassionate response. Just as Prospero is moved by Ariel’s e-motions, so too playgoers may be moved by Prospero’s.

Yet *The Tempest* presents neither a complete cure nor absolute closure. At the end of the play Alonso is reformed in body and soul, but Sebastian and Antonio’s penitence remains uncertain. Similarly, the spritely masquers’ “graceful dancing” moves Prospero to terror and, albeit by a circuitous path, Ariel’s “graceful” (3.3.84) impersonation of a harpy moves him to pity; but it is unclear whether Prospero, having “[his] dukedom got / And pardoned the deceiver,” will prove a better ruler as a result (Epi. 6–7). This ambiguity is crucial to the play in performance, especially as it bears on the play’s impact on audiences. The Epilogue invites playgoers to judge Prospero’s conduct when he (or the actor playing Prospero, at least) asks them to “release” him from “this bare island” (the playhouse) and “help” him home (Epi. 8–10). While playgoers may absolve Prospero and assist his return to Milan, they may also decide he is unfit to rule and condemn him to endless residence on the barren island, not unlike the “endless tragedy” to which Revenge condemns Andrea’s enemies at the end of *The Spanish Tragedy*. At the same time, the Epilogue implicitly circumscribes the audience’s response by making applause the condition for narrative closure in Prospero’s return to Milan. With their gestures playgoers ultimately determine the play’s genre, but by perpetuating Prospero’s “despair,” they deny themselves the “pleas[ure]” of formal resolution (Epi. 13, 15).

By highlighting the way the recursive movements of revenge tragedy situate playgoers as arbiters, collaborators, and collateral damage, *The Tempest* invites reconsideration of the genre’s *longue durée*. A common explanation for revenge tragedy’s seemingly universal appeal is its gratification of a basic human desire for violence. It offers audiences the horrors of bloody crimes and vigilante justice in the safety zone of the amphitheater or private hall, or, more recently, the cinema. This explanation privileges revenge tragedy as a narrative form: it represents a particular sequence of events, and this plot remains securely representational and thus separate from reality. Attention to revenge tragedy as an embodied performance presents a significant caveat. The circular motions that revenge tragedy enacts do not halt at the edge of the stage but enter the audience’s space, compelling their motion and emotion, putting them at risk. This risk, although inherent to the experience of playgoing in Renaissance England, is especially acute when the

narrative enacted onstage threatens to move audiences to lawlessness or cruelty, incite their fury, or drive them to despair. Yet for hundreds of years audiences around the world have submitted willingly to this propulsion, and they continue to return again and again to revenge tragedy, finding pleasure in being plagued in art.

NOTES

- 1 Cf. Neill (1983, 45–9), and Kerrigan (1996, 211–16), which discuss *The Tempest* as a revenge tragedy.
- 2 Revival is key to the overwhelming popularity of the revenge tragedy beginning in the late sixteenth century: Pollard (2010) argues that the revival of ancient writings, including Aristotle's theory, Greek tragedies, and Seneca's imitations, is the foundation on which English dramatists built revenge tragedy by innovating conventions to address emergent political and emotional debates and needs.
- 3 As Worthen argues, responding to the notion that dramatic language supplants theatrical action: "language onstage ... works in active, dialectical counterpoint to behavior and gains its sense from the scene in which, and purposes with which, it is performed as action" (2011, 323–4).
- 4 Given Marston's competitive relationship with Jonson, it is tempting to propose that Marston echoes (anticipates?) his rival's masques, such as *Hymenaei* (1606), written for the celebration of the marriage of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, and Lady Frances Howard, and frequently cited as a source for Prospero's masque in *The Tempest*. Here, "spirits of the air" encircle Juno's throne, above which "fire with a continual motion ... whirl[s] circularly" (Jonson [1606] 1970, 200–2sd); they "[dance] with a varied and noble grace" (244sd) and present "a most neat and curious measure" (279sd).

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Romance and Tragicomedy

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In a note prefacing the 1637 playbook *The Cid*, Joseph Rutter describes the play as “being a true history, though like a romance,” and hopes that his English translation of the French play might “be imitated of our undertakers in the like kinde” (sig. A4). Rutter’s source was the popular Pierre Corneille play, itself a dramatic transposition of a well-known Spanish legend that first appeared in French stage productions in 1637. The title-page for the 1637 Paris edition of the play announces *Le Cid* as “TRAGI-COMEDIE,” a designation repeated on the title-page of Rutter’s translation. The dramatic adaptation of this chivalric tale turned tragicomedy thus raises questions about the terminology that is the focus of this chapter. The labels “tragicomedy” and “romance” are today sometimes used interchangeably, particularly in the study of Shakespeare and his “late plays.” But Rutter’s translation pre-dates Shakespeare’s so-called “romances” or “tragicomedies,” and considering the association of these terms in this lesser-known context raises new questions about how their meanings may have been understood in the early modern period. Why does Rutter, for instance, call his material both “a true history” and “like a romance”? What relationship does tragicomedy bear to these other two genres, and what differences between romance and tragicomedy would prompt Rutter to describe the tragicomedy as “like,” but not quite, a romance?

Answers to these questions invite a consideration of a wide range of English plays performed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that often shared ties with narrative romance as well as sources or influences from other national traditions. Some plays were identified explicitly as tragicomedies; others contained tragicomic structures but were not identified as such; and still others contained episodic plots or themes and motifs associated with romance, suggesting an emerging genre of dramatic romance yet to be named. Table 30.1 and Table 30.2 (found at the end of this chapter) offer compilations of early modern plays that might be considered romances or tragicomedies. These lists are not intended to be completely comprehensive, but

rather to give a sense of the extent of the tradition of these genres in the period. Such variety bespeaks an ongoing process of generic experimentation that produced inchoate and dynamic categories of plays as rich in their derivations as in their innovations. It also suggests that no easy or clear-cut explanations exist for the relationships and differences between romance and tragicomedy. Responding to the problematic way that generic classifications attempt to pigeonhole texts, Wai Chee Dimock views genres as “kinship networks,” rather than as discrete or clearly demarcated categories (2007, 1380). This concept is useful for understanding the many variations encompassed within the genres of romance and tragicomedy as well as the interrelations between the two.

If Joseph Rutter’s explicit association of tragicomedy with romance in 1637 reinforces an association that has come to seem familiar and natural to modern audiences, it may also belie important differences between the terms within an early modern context. When Rutter refers to *The Cid* as “being a true history, though like a romance,” he insists upon the story’s putative historical underpinnings, but his specification of the form it takes – “like a romance” – indicates a history with certain formal conventions that accentuate its expansiveness in time and plot. Commenting on the process by which the truth of a story might be adapted to meet the requirements of a poetic form, the Prologue to the 1607 play *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* explains, “Our scene is mantled in the robe of truth, / Yet must we crave (by law of poesy), / To give our history an ornament” (Prologue ll. 5–7). Rutter’s reference to “like a romance” seems to describe a similar “ornament[ation]” of history. In the early modern period “romance” was typically understood to refer to long narrative forms – descriptive stories in prose or verse that moved through vast geographies and spanned long periods of time. Well-known early modern English examples include Sir Philip Sidney’s *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (1590), Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590–6), and Mary Wroth’s *Urania* (1621). Romance plots were often episodic, or characterized by a series of new, unrelated episodes.

Such a form was not characteristic of tragicomedy, which tended to follow a more unified circular structure in which a tragic course was narrowly averted and redirected to arrive at a comic resolution. In this sense, tragicomedy employed a structure that was similar to the circular itinerary that Marissa Greenberg identifies in the form and performance of revenge tragedy (see Chapter 29 in this volume). *Le Cid* retains many of the trappings of romance from its narrative source, including its medieval Spanish setting, its reference to chivalric battles against invading Moors, and its hero’s dilemma between honor and love. But its central conflict is ultimately resolved through a definitive duel that reconciles the hero with the lover whom he is prevented from marrying at the start of the play. In France it was famously condemned for its violation of neoclassical unities and perhaps particularly for its allusions to events not contained within the action of the drama itself, such as the hero’s trials at war. However, by virtue of its circular structure and unexpected comic resolution, *Le Cid* earns its designation as a “tragicomedy.” Whereas romance deferred resolution, tragicomedy privileged the production of an improbable resolution.

Unlike romance, tragicomedy existed in the early modern period as an explicitly theatrical genre. It debuted on the English stage around the year 1600 and rose to great popularity by the 1620s and 1630s. As we discuss below, it had antecedents in the ancient classical tradition of Plautus as well as in the form of the medieval miracle play. However, its most immediate influences in England were those of contemporary Continental theatrical traditions, including the French tradition as we have seen with *Le Cid*, but perhaps more significantly those of Italy and Spain. Some critics have also argued for a distinctly English brand of tragicomedy, exemplified for Barbara Mowat (2003) in the plays of Shakespeare and for Nathaniel C. Leonard

(2012) in the plays of John Marston. John Fletcher's 1608 *The Faithful Shepherdess* was the first English play to be explicitly identified as a tragicomedy on its title-page. In a preface "To the Reader," Fletcher acknowledges his debts to Giambattista Guarini's pastoral tragicomedy *Il pastor fido* (1590) and more generally to the Italianate tradition. Most significantly, Fletcher defends the form's unity by stating, "A tragi-comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy" (1608, sig. 2v). In other words, a tragicomedy is not simply an amalgam of comic and tragic elements, but rather achieves a complex unity and tension by coming close to tragedy and then averting it. While certainly a variety of tragicomic models existed on the Renaissance stage, the model Fletcher describes captures a key characteristic of many English tragicomedies, which is that the comic resolution achieves its powerful impact by virtue of the threat of death (or other tragedy) that it miraculously averts. The aversion of tragedy was sometimes facilitated through chance, sometimes through human agency, and sometimes through divine intervention, but it always offered at least the trappings of a definitive resolution.

By contrast, as Patricia Parker (1979) has argued, dilation and digression were hallmarks of narrative romance, as was its tendency endlessly to defer resolution. Although such a form would seem ill-suited to the stage (as we discuss below), a discernible tradition of romance did emerge within the popular dramatic culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like narrative romance, the action of these plays traversed broad expanses of time and space, and the episodic structure of their plots tended to prolong resolution and extend the possibilities of the drama. The anonymous *Tom a Lincoln* (1608–15), based on a popular prose romance of the same title by Richard Johnson, offers a good example of how romance's digressive form was transposed onto the stage. The play dramatizes the exploits of King Arthur's illegitimate son, a young man who is raised by a shepherd and later becomes a member of Arthur's round table. The action in the play follows Tom as he searches for the identity of his father through England, France, Fairy Land, and finally Prester John's kingdom, where he elopes with the king's daughter. At the conclusion of the play, Tom has yet to find his father, his quest left incomplete. Readers of Johnson's romances would have known of the second part of the story, where a son Tom fathered with the Fairy Queen sets out on his own journey and eventually faces his father in battle. Thus, in contrast to the spectacular resolution offered by the logic of the tragicomic plot, the nature of the romance plot is that of continuation and extension: unfinished quests, untold stories, a promise of new lands to explore.

Classifying Shakespeare's "Late Plays"

As the preceding suggests, because genres are neither static nor discrete, they need to be approached as dynamic, historically contingent processes. Recent generic criticism and theory has thus emphasized the practical importance of genres: beyond merely sorting texts into categories, genre criticism has sought to restore some idea of the artistic practices, historical conditions, and political significances that accompanied cultural production.¹ Looked at historically, genres have also operated in both directions – they play forward and backward. Preceding strands of tradition influence the formation of genres in their time, a process that calls for one kind of historical reading. Yet genres also coalesce in later periods as well, as critics and editors name and realign the canon retrospectively. This kind of generic naming has been particularly influential

to the study of Shakespearean romance and tragicomedy, categories unnamed in the First Folio, or in any of the earlier quarto editions, yet commonly employed in collections today. Thus, in approaching these categories, it is necessary to view both the later reconfigurations of the genres and to view them historically. In addition to considering how “romance” and “tragicomedy” were understood in the early modern period, we might question how our later uses of these terms shape our understanding of plays today, both within and outside of Shakespeare’s canon.

The history of how certain Shakespearean plays came to be known as romances and tragicomedies provides an interesting case study both because of how influential these designations have become and because of their absence on the plays’ early modern title-pages and the First Folio. The iconic title of Shakespeare’s first collected works – *Mr. William Shakespeare’s Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* – makes an argument for the centrality of genre in approaching Shakespeare’s plays. Conspicuously absent are the genres of “romance” and “tragicomedy.” The new generic trinity of “comedies, histories, and tragedies” is schematically represented in the First Folio’s “Catalogue” and repaginated in three separate sections, suggesting inviolable categories. And yet, the labeling of Shakespeare’s plays was under contention both before and after the posthumous publication of the 1623 collection. The early quarto editions of the plays did not always predict how a play would be listed in the Folio. Several plays that have become quite definitively associated with “comedy” or “tragedy” since the First Folio were, in their earlier quarto printings, identified as histories, including *A Pleasant Conceited History Called The Taming of a Shrew* (1594), *The Most Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice* (1600), *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet* (1603), and *The Famous Historie of Troilus and Cressida* (1609). The First Folio would redefine “history” as English regnal history, significantly raising the profile of that relatively new dramatic genre. Subsequent to the Folio’s publication, seventeenth-century writers found a greater diversity in the plays: Gerard Langbaine’s *An account of the English dramatick poets* (1691), for instance, calls *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Winter’s Tale* “tragicomedies.”

Most modern editions add yet another category, the “romances,” which typically include *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, and a fourth play not included in the First Folio, *Pericles*.² These plays, as many critics have observed, were never called “romances” in their own time. Edward Dowden, the eminent Shakespearean of the late nineteenth century, was the first to group them under the genre of romance. In these plays, Dowden saw a pattern of stories, motifs, and even readerly affect: “There is a romantic element about these plays ... The dramas have a grave beauty, a sweet serenity, which seem to render the name ‘comedies’ inappropriate; we may smile tenderly, but we never laugh loudly, as we read them” ([1885] 1931, 55–6). A distinct language of affect characterizes this description, suggesting that the emotive responses generated by the plays – smiles, laughter – defines them as much as their content. Like Samuel Taylor Coleridge before him, Dowden understood the evolution of Shakespeare’s art in the turning of his spirit. Dowden’s criticism was thus forwardly psychological; he argued for a profound congruence between artistic expression, authorial development, and audience response. Also, like the romantic critics who preceded him, Dowden was interested primarily in accounting for the individual genius of Shakespeare, a project that led him to the study of genre through biography.

Although romances have come to be understood as a dramatic kind or category, Dowden never really imagined them as such – if by “kind” we mean a pattern or set of motifs that are to be imitated or repeated. In his view Shakespeare’s late plays were entirely singular, the product of a

unique artistic development. According to Dowden's widely read biographical study, the romances are inextricably linked to the period of Shakespeare's life in which they were supposedly written, a time of "large, serene wisdom" ([1875] 1967, 403). The power of this biographical association to the late plays as romances has perhaps been underemphasized in more recent criticism. On the one hand, Dowden's criterion for defining the genre of romance as a product of Shakespeare's artistic and psychological maturation appears to be a far cry from more contemporary ways of theorizing genre. Yet even as Shakespeareans have come to regard such attributions as essentialist or ahistorical, their continued categorization of Shakespeare's late plays as romances preserves at least some of the sentimentality inscribed by the creation of the "romances" in the nineteenth century.

Following quickly on Dowden's identification of Shakespeare's final plays as romances, critics in the early twentieth century began to refine the details of this biographical thesis. Perhaps the most influential of these attempts, and most relevant for our discussion, was Ashley Thorndike's *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspeare* (1901). Thorndike acknowledged the same problem posed by Dowden – how do we understand the artistic shift that seems to have happened between the writing of tragedies and another kind of play in the early part of the seventeenth century? He responded by looking to the influence of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, the latter of whom worked in collaboration with Shakespeare during the same period. At least partly disavowing the psychological premises of Dowden's criticism, Thorndike sought "objective influences," which he attributed to the work of Shakespeare's contemporaries (1901, 6). Thorndike continued to call *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale* (he leaves off *Pericles*) "romances," but in arguing that tragicomedy was a chief influence on these plays, he opened the discussion to later critics who would continue to promote the idea that these plays should be called "tragicomedies." Today, all four plays are referred to as tragicomedies at least as commonly as they are romances. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), coauthored by Fletcher and Shakespeare, follows a discernible tragicomic structure, which gives credence to Thorndike's thesis.

Within Shakespeare studies today, a frail consensus maintains that tragicomedies and romances have enough in common to support a qualified overlap between the two categories. To be sure, they employ many of the same tropes and characteristics, including foreign, exotic settings; instances of confused identity, repetition, and reunion; improbable events associated with the force of fortune or providence; and metaphors of rebirth and resurrection. Some critics view romance as a forerunner to tragicomedy, and certainly many tragicomedies were based on romance stories. While registering caveats about the fluid nature of early modern genres, Barbara Mowat argues that Shakespeare's last plays "are part of a larger family of dramatized romances," and that they "present highly sophisticated versions of an [early] form of tragicomedy with native rather than Italianate roots" (2003, 143). Considering the late plays as a group, Janette Dillon likewise suggests that "the combination of romantic elements and tragicomic structure together does go some way to identify and differentiate the grouping" (2010, 172). However, if considerations of Shakespeare's final plays lend themselves to observations about the overlaps between romance and tragicomedy, a broader consideration of plays performed and printed during both the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods reveals important distinctions in the development of these two genres. The remainder of this chapter moves to a wider consideration of Renaissance drama with the aim of disentangling tragicomedy and romance so as to elucidate the distinct character of each genre in the early modern theater.

Romance on the Renaissance Stage

Looking beyond the plays of Shakespeare, there existed a significant tradition of dramatic romance on the Renaissance stage, featuring plays that shared discernible formal characteristics, thematic concerns, and cultural interests. As critics such as Stanley Wells (1965), Steve Mentz (2006), and Tanya Pollard (2008) have argued, the emergence of this tradition may have been influenced by the sixteenth-century rediscovery of classic Greek romances by Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius, and Longus. But the flourishing of this dramatic genre also reflects interests and aspirations that were contemporary to the period. Cyrus Mulready (2013) demonstrates that dramatic romance emerged in response to English expansionism. This approach offers a new history of the genre: revealing how the theatrical dramatization of romance plots appeared as a significant cultural response to the social, intellectual, and economic changes prompted by England's increasing role within a global economy. The long tradition of romance contained stories well suited to this purpose. Popular tales such as *Chinon of England* (1597) or *Guy of Warwick* (verse editions were printed in 1565 and 1609) depicted adventurous travel, imperial conquest, and the exploration of new realms. But bringing these stories to the stage also required innovations in dramatic poetics, and audiences of the time embraced both the content of the plays and the new representational possibilities they established in the theater.

A useful illustration of these points is Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* (1599), whose title character acquires a magical "wishing cap" from the Sultan of Babylon that allows him to travel anywhere in the world with a mere thought. The action on stage requires the intervention of a "Chorus," a figure who invites the audience into the creation of the spectacle and asks the viewers to imagine "you haue saild with him vpon the seas / And leapt with him vpon the Asian shores" (2.1.11–12). Audiences could thus partake in Fortunatus' fantastical travels and adventures, magical stories that also expressed novel but real prospects for contemporary Londoners. These ambitions are captured in Fortunatus' own expansionist reverie: "In these two hands doe I gripe all the world. / This leather purse, and this bald woolen Hat / Make me a Monarch: heres my Crowne and Scepter" (2.2.218–20). In Dekker's play, however, these fantasies are also presented, ultimately, for critique. The surviving printed edition of the play records a performance of the play before Queen Elizabeth; this context renders Fortunatus' boast as a mark of ambition. Indeed, the play turns into a kind of morality story that might be read as a larger criticism of commercial greed, expansion, and exploitation. Romance could thus demonstrate both the alluring possibilities of the world and expose its dangers.

On the surface, it would seem that the capaciousness of romance would make it a genre ill-suited to the stage. This, in fact, was one of the key objections Sir Philip Sidney raised against English plays in his *Defence of Poesy* (1595): "How shall we set forth a story which containeth both many places and many times?" – a question to which Sidney responds, insistently, "do they not know that a tragedy is tied to the laws of poesy, and not history; not bound to follow the story" ([1595] 2002, 244). For Sidney, drama is a distinct form that should be treated as separate from that of narrative, or "history." Trying to enact a story like those of romance leads to what Sidney saw as absurdities. He uses the example of Pacolet's Horse, a magical device from the romance *Valentine and Orson*, to illustrate: "I may speak (though I am here) of Peru, and in speech digress from that to the description of Calicut; but in action I cannot represent it without Pacolet's horse" (244). Sidney's allusion to romance is meant as a jab here, a ludicrous image of a flying horse carrying its passengers to the faraway places that a bare stage, in his mind, could never

represent. But as we saw in *Old Fortunatus*, English playwrights in fact did continue to use material from romance that stretched the limitations of the stage, and the effects were not simply ludicrous. Playwrights who embraced a new dramatic poetics to accommodate the extravagant narratives of romance also altered the practices and semiotics of the theater. Thus, in a broader sense, the arrival of romance as a dramatic genre went hand-in-hand with wider developments within theatrical history. These developments, in turn, were prompted by an audience that had a taste for plays that sought to encompass and represent a world of new territories, markets, and consumer goods that were increasingly a part of their everyday experience. Such an audience was not limited in the ways Sidney feared, but rather was enticed by the prospects of seeing “Peru” and “Calicut” brought to the stage. While Sidney found such material fundamentally incompatible with theatrical representation, plays drawn from romance suggest an audience less interested in verisimilitude, in favor of one that was more taken with the flights of fancy that plays taken from romance could embody.

A useful example that might help us to understand the appeal of romance to its early viewers and also demonstrate some of the dramaturgical innovations of the stage romance is the anonymous *Guy of Warwick*, a play whose theatrical history likely dates to the early 1590s. Its unlikely first publication in 1661, long after what seems to have been the heyday of dramatic romance, speaks to the enduring popularity of the genre. The persistence of this dramatized version of the story also indicates that well into the seventeenth century romance retained its hybrid character as both a narrative and a dramatic genre. In their collection *Staging Early Modern Romance* (2009), Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne draw attention to the often unacknowledged continuities between prose romances and early modern plays. The mixture of story and enactment required that plays drawn from tales like *Guy of Warwick* incorporate devices that could blend the narrative elements with the theatrical. In the following speech from the character Time, who functions as a chorus to the action of the drama, the very issues of theatrical representation and the division of narrative are addressed:

*you fair beholders of this honoured story,
think now that Guy of Warwick be is gone,
leaving these Fairies and King Oberon,
and now to fair Jerusalem takes his way;*

*long stories are not told in little time,
much matter in small room we must combine:
wee'l curtall nothing, yet make something short,
because we would shun tediousnesse of sport;
if it be long, say length is all the fault,
if it be lame, say old men needs must halt.*

([1661] 2007, sig. C1v)

Translating romances into stage adaptations required “much matter in small room,” a metaphor that captures the way in which physical space and narrative duration must contract in order for romance to be enacted on stage. The “room” of the stage, after all, is yet another structure of abridgment that works on the material of the source. And as this brief narration demonstrates, the content of the story presses this problem directly. Guy travels from England to points around the globe (here from Fairly Land to Jerusalem), the kind of travel that typifies romance. Returning

to the question of Sidney – how can many places and many times be represented on the stage? – the narrator Time steps in to bridge the gap.

But it is not only Time that must do the work of translating Guy from the tales of medieval romance to the stage, or from Fairy Land to Jerusalem. The direct appeal to the audience here also characterizes the dramatizations of romance that became popular in this period. The “fair beholders” are asked to imagine Guy’s travel, to “think” that he has come to Jerusalem, a place that they also must imagine through the action of the plot. In the neoclassical paradigms of Sidney and others, such violations of place were unacceptable, mainly because they burdened the viewer’s senses and capacity for belief. But as the tradition of romance flourished, it demonstrated a willingness, even a desire, on the part of theatergoers to participate in the creations of these spectacles. The popularity of romance on the early modern stage suggests a shift in standards among theatergoers away from the neoclassical unities to plots that were sprawling, settings that spanned the globe, and compressions or expanses of time that required playwrights to manipulate the temporal arcs of their stories or to locate action offstage. Part of what drew audiences to these plays may have been a new appreciation for the dramatic technologies that transposed romance onto the stage, including the casting of Time as narrator or the use of costuming, wigs, and cosmetics to indicate the passage of time. In turn, the plays cast their audiences’ imaginations as a vehicle that could transport them outside of their everyday London lives in ways perhaps more powerful than theatrical verisimilitude. As Thomas Heywood writes for his chorus in *The Foure Prentises of London* (1615), “Had not yee rather, for nouelties sake: see Ierusalem yee neuer saw, then London that yee see howerly?” (sig. A4v). While such invocations of the audience’s imagination initially seem like a dramatic device required by the expansive plot, time scale, and geography of romance, they may have also been a tool for engaging audience interest in the material and the potential “novelty” of its representations.

Tragicomedy on the Renaissance Stage

Although playwrights writing tragicomedies and dramatic romances frequently borrowed from the same material, the strategies of their plotting, the nature of their generic mixing, and the ultimate effect of their performances were often quite different. While the appeal of romance came from the peripatetic engagements of its characters, tragicomedies often relied upon more tightly arranged circumstances. How would the threat of impending tragedy be resolved to produce a comic ending? A murderous vow of revenge, threatened circumcision or apostasy, the possibility of an incestuous romance: in tragicomedy, these scenarios place the audience on a razor’s edge as they await the expected turn that restores the play to normal order. Indeed, the typical tragicomedy of the period relied upon a structure that was formulaic rather than novel, but that found its appeal in the alterations and adaptations playwrights could make to its components of the drama. The resulting form presented audiences with a kind of metadramatic puzzle.

Consider, for example, the tragicomic structure of Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613). The play opens with a marriage interrupted by three queens announcing the deaths of their husbands and eliciting the Athenian duke’s vow of revenge – signaling the play’s self-conscious interest in the manipulation of generic expectation. The plot raises suspense

through its introduction of two worthy heroes – devoted cousins – vying for the same woman, posing the question of how a comic resolution can be achieved if one nobleman must necessarily lose. Viewers familiar with the structure of the tragicomic plot might speculate upon how the improbable circumstances of the story would develop and resolve. The use of a duel to decide the contest between the two cousins provides an unexpected resolution when the victor is mortally wounded due to the seemingly providential spooking of his horse. On his deathbed he bequeaths the woman to his rival, thus reconciling the rift between the two men and resolving the love triangle not through violence but through an act of generosity. Unlike the deaths that open the play, the death that ends it leads not to revenge but to reconciliation. Such a resolution seems to raise self-reflexive questions about whether death and tragedy must always go together. The irony of achieving comic resolution through death exposes the costs of comedy as well as the play's metadramatic preoccupations.

Arguably, the history of tragicomedy suggests that it was not always distinguished by the structure of its plot. While strongly associated with a development of the seventeenth-century stage, tragicomedy has roots in the dramatic tradition of classical antiquity where it referred to plays combining characters of different statuses. The term *tragicomoedia* was first coined by Plautus in the Prologue to the *Amphitryo* delivered by Mercury: "I'll make sure it's a mixed play; it'll be a tragicomedy. Well, I don't think it would be appropriate to turn completely into a comedy a play where kings and gods come onstage" (2011; ll. 59–61). As Sarah Dewar-Watson has observed, "the idea of social hierarchy and the status of the *dramatis personae* are key to Plautus' conception of genre" (2007, 17), though the lines above suggest more of a joke than a serious theorization of genre. Indeed, a number of Renaissance tragicomedies mixed gods and humans, and more significantly, characters of different classes, such as noble and non-noble characters, or in the cases of Thomas Heywood and William Rowley's *Fortune by Land and Sea* (1607) and Rowley, Dekker, and John Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621), middling and lower-class characters. Sidney would detect tragicomedy's mixing of classes in his *Defence* and use it as fodder for his critique of plays whose generic mixtures lacked proper integrity.

Even though Sidney acknowledges ancient precedents for generic mixing, he chides English dramatists for producing what he calls "mongrel tragi-comedy": "all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion" ([1595] 2002, 244). But despite Sidney's nod to Plautus' joke about mixing gods and kings, the tragicomedies that became popular on the Renaissance stage were not always, or even predominantly, distinguished by the mixed status of their characters. Rather, their mixing of tragedy and comedy usually extended beyond the level of character and was manifested in the structuring of plot. In turn, these plots generated complex affective responses. In his *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* John Dryden defends tragicomedy's mixing of genre on the basis of its sensitivity to the emotional experience of watching a play:

A continued gravity keeps the spirit too much bent. We must refresh it sometimes, as we bait upon a journey, that we may go on with greater ease. A scene of mirth mixed with Tragedy has the same effect upon us which our music has betwixt the acts, and that we find a relief to us from the best plots and language of the stage. ([1668] 1987, 103)

Dryden's interpretation of tragicomedy reflects a strong degree of sensitivity and craft on the part of the playwright that might be seen to address Sidney's earlier concern with plays that simply

“matche horne Pipes and Funeralls” and fail to do it “daintily” ([1595] 2002, 244). From this we might speculate that tragicomedies sought to elicit new and different kinds of emotional responses from audiences.

Given the extent to which tragicomedies were distinguished by their plot structures, perhaps a more meaningful antecedent to Renaissance tragicomedy than the classical tradition of Plautus was medieval religious drama, which frequently employed the Christian tragicomic structure of sin and redemption. As Mimi Still Dixon has argued, “Stories of fall and repentance, despair and renewal, struggles between saint and idolator, or tyrant and martyr, are all in various ways averted tragedies, serious conflicts resolved improbably into joyful endings” (1987, 62). In the case of plays depicting Christ’s passion, death itself provided the source for comic resolution in the form of resurrection. In miracle plays such as the fifteenth-century Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, tragedy was improbably redeemed through miracle and conversion. The miraculous spontaneous conversion of three Jews bent on torturing the Eucharistic wafer in the Croxton play throws into relief the extent to which tragicomedy diverts the course of revenge through redemption, offering both the catharsis of tragedy and the pleasure and relief of comedy.

The Italian influence of Giambattista Guarini on English tragicomedy, particularly as registered through John Fletcher’s *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608) and Fletcher’s early theorizing of the genre, gives emphasis to a plot-driven understanding of tragicomedy that is characterized by structural unity. Implicitly countering the charge that tragicomedy was a “mongrel” genre that haphazardly combined “horne pipes and funeralls,” Guarini argued for the holistic integrity of tragicomedy in his *Compendio della poesia tragicomica* (1599): “He who makes a tragicomedy does not intend to compose separately either a tragedy or a comedy, but from the two a third thing that will be perfect in its kind, and may take from the others the parts that with most verisimilitude can stand together” ([1599] 1940, 507). Guarini thus described tragicomedy as an integrated structure, a “third thing” distinct from tragedy or comedy that was “perfect” in its own “kind.” In *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Fletcher adopted the pastoral mode of Guarini’s *Pastor fido* (1590) and Torquato Tasso’s *Aminta* (1573) for the English stage. But more significantly and enduringly, he would interpret the integrity of tragicomic structure to be held together by the suspense of a narrowly averted threat of death. Responding to the theatrical failure of *The Faithful Shepherdess* in his preface to the printed edition, Fletcher emphasizes the way in which the threat of death holds comedy and tragedy in suspension. Although audiences may have viewed the play as an amalgam of “mirth and killing,” Fletcher suggests that tragicomedy actually withholds both tragedy and comedy – thus associating the genre with restraint and discipline rather than excess (1608, sig. 2v). Further, he emphasized how tragicomedy was comprised of “familiar people,” suggesting, like Guarini, that the genre offered a new potential for verisimilitude (sig. 2v). Following Guarini, Fletcher ultimately understood the integrity of the tragicomic plot to be achieved through the subordination of tragedy to comedy. It is perhaps curious, then, that *The Faithful Shepherdess* did contain death. Indeed, many tragicomedies featured deaths, and in some cases linked comic resolution directly to a death, as in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Such variation suggests that English playwrights experimented widely with tragicomedy, some straying quite far from the models laid out by Guarini and Fletcher in the early 1600s.

Of course, Fletcher himself would largely abandon the pastoral mode in the 1610s and 1620s and experiment with different tragicomic formulas, often collaborating with Francis Beaumont

and other playwrights. Jacobean playwrights experimented with the different kinds of tragic dangers, substituting in place of death the threats of rape, incest, bigamy, same-sex desire, apostasy, circumcision, and castration. Observing the Renaissance pun for “die” as orgasm, Verna Foster (2004) has demonstrated how sex is often structurally equivalent to death in tragicomedy. Playwrights experimented with creative and improbable ways of resolving tragic threats, titillating audiences with how far a tragic potentiality could be pushed and still be rectified, as well as raising the question of whether some tragic potentialities could not be reversed. Often, the resolution that brought comic closure to a plot was simultaneously unsettling. For example, *The Queen of Corinth* (1616–18), which Fletcher likely coauthored with Nathan Field and Philip Massinger, posits the disturbing possibility that the rape of a virgin might be comically redeemed through marriage between the rapist and his victim.

Tragicomedy’s diversity on the English stage reflects in part its multifarious European influences, which reveal the transnational processes at work in the shaping of dramatic genre, as well as the distinct multicultural character of English tragicomedy. In addition to drawing upon Continental theories of tragicomedy, English playwrights frequently adapted Spanish, Italian, and French sources. Massinger’s *The Renegado* (1624) was based on Miguel de Cervantes’ play *Los Baños de Argel* (1615). Shakespeare’s lost *Cardenio* was likely based on *Don Quixote* (1605), and Fletcher, too, relied heavily on the work of Cervantes, especially *Don Quixote* and the *Novelas ejemplares* (1613). As Josephine Hardman (2017) has discussed, Cervantes’ influence may help to explain the heightened irony and metatheatricity that characterizes tragicomedies such as *Love’s Pilgrimage* (1616) and *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1625). These plays also reflected processes of cultural and political transposition. According to Barbara Fuchs, English playwrights’ heavy reliance on Spanish sources reflected England’s paradoxical regard for Spain as “a model constantly emulated even as it was disavowed” due to political rivalry (2013, 4–5). As Carmen Nocentelli (2010) has shown, Fletcher’s *The Island Princess* (1621) suggests a particularly interesting history of transnational appropriation, owing debts to a 1609 Spanish history by Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola and a 1615 French novella by Louis Gédéon, sieur de Bellan, which was bound with editions of Cervantes’ *Novelas ejemplares*. Nocentelli’s analysis opens a critical path for perceiving the intra-European competition that characterized transnational translation and appropriation, as well as the ways in which these literary practices registered imperial relationships. The linguistic, cultural, and political transpositions that lay at the heart of English tragicomedy constitute a crucial dimension of the many mixings that characterize this early modern genre.

The Cultural and Political Work of Genre

If the study of genre through much of the twentieth century was primarily dedicated to questions of cultural aesthetics, more recent criticism has foregrounded the interrelations between art and the social, political, and economic underpinnings of early modern culture. These critics follow the pioneering intervention of Fredric Jameson, who in *The Political Unconscious* (1981) and elsewhere modeled a genre criticism that sought to coordinate formal concerns with wider historical phenomena. In his study of romance, the influential “Magical Narratives,” for instance, Jameson finds evidence of the collapse of feudalism and the beginnings of capitalism in the

alterations that writers make in writing romance. These alterations arise at moments of historical “dilemma,” Jameson argues, and genres therefore can serve as a register for other societal trends (1981, 139). Unlike earlier genre critics, who tended to view literary kinds as static and unchanging, Jameson argued that the persistence of genres could only be explained by their adaptability through time. Helen Cooper’s *The English Romance in Time* draws from a similar insight in arguing that “while the motifs of romance remain largely the same, the usage and understanding of them changes over time” (2004, vii).

A range of critics have taken up the project of examining the “social texts,” to use Jameson’s phrase, embedded within English dramatic genres, and especially romance and tragicomedy. The essays in Nancy Klein Maguire’s collection *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics* (1987) and Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope’s collection *The Politics of Tragicomedy* (1992) mark initial investigations of tragicomedy’s seventeenth-century political contexts. Subha Mukherji and Raphael Lyne’s more recent collection *Early Modern Tragicomedy* (2007) usefully extends the discussion to the European context and considers tragicomedy’s historical roots, innovations, and political significance. Other recent studies approach tragicomedy as a vital lens for understanding economic theory and practice in the context of early modern England’s shifting market realities. Valerie Forman (2008), most notably, asserts that tragicomedy’s reconceptualization of loss as productive fosters a mutual relationship between the development of a new generic form and a new economic practice based on foreign investment. The form of tragicomedy, she argues, is productive of an economic logic that makes global trade and profit seem redemptive. In a similar vein, Zachary Lesser’s (2007) reading of John Fletcher’s *The Sea Voyage* (1622) relies upon a discussion of monetary policy in Jacobean England that illuminates that play’s treatment of New World gold.

Romance and its expansionist geography also proved to be a fecund ground for exploring a broadening global awareness and celebrating or critiquing colonial practices. Barbara Fuchs (2001) and Joan Pong Linton (1998), working in the Spanish and English traditions respectively, have argued that the colonial aspirations of early modern empire found expression in romance – both in the stories themselves and in how writers, critics, and even government officials read and appropriated these tales. Brian Lockey (2006) argues that legal discourses of empire were born out of the imaginary worlds of romance. Although he is primarily concerned with Shakespearean drama, Steve Mentz (2008) has connected romance to ecological perspectives, suggesting that the genre registered emerging scientific explanations for the natural world that compete with the authority of providential forces.

Romance and tragicomedy alike have functioned centrally in discussions of religion, especially in relation to Reformation politics and the conflict between western Christianity and Islam. Geraldine Heng (2003) and Benedict Robinson (2007), like Jameson before them, find in romance a set of ready-made tropes for the conflict between self and other that are used to promote (and sometimes complicate) Christian ideologies. Similarly, Michael Neill (2007) finds that the generic turns of tragicomedy in Philip Massinger’s *The Renegado* (1624) address the doctrinal shifts within the Anglican Church during the 1620s. Shifting focus to the English imagining of the Muslim world, Jane Hwang Degenhardt (2009) argues that *The Renegado*’s tragicomic form serves as a theatrical vehicle for exploring the gendered and racial logics of conversion between Christianity and Islam. This play offers a fascinating perspective on how the formulaic structure of tragicomedy might offer unique insight into cultural biases and contradictions. If, in *The Renegado*, conversion to Islam constitutes the tragic threat and conversion to Christianity supplies the comic

resolution, then the play mediates conversion through a cultural logic that affords redemption only to certain kinds of characters. Contradicting the Pauline premise that anyone might be eligible for Christian redemption, the play's logic of conversion is informed by factors of gender, sexuality, and religious/racial difference that exclude Muslim men from the Christian fold and refuse to allow a Christian woman to cross over to Islam. As this reading suggests, tragicomedy proves fascinating not only because of the complexity of its conventions but also because of how its structural ruptures expose deep-seated cultural investments.

Popular Plays and Forgotten Histories

What might we learn about the genres of romance and tragicomedy from their political, economic, and imaginative commitments? Both tragicomedy and romance were indicted in their time for their innovations in representing time, space, and action. But perhaps it was these very extravagances that made these genres appropriate for the complexities of a new global environment and the challenges it presented to traditional organizing principles. For critics there remains important work to do in understanding how these genres signaled politically to their audiences, and how their unique forms of entertainment were imbued with purpose. Was there a special satisfaction that came in the resolution of a tragicomic plot, even as it revealed the dangerous possibilities of rape, conversion, or irredeemable loss? Did the romance plot, with its lack of resolution, entice its audiences to further imaginings, even as it brought them further afield of their own world?

The range and breadth of the plays listed in the tables attest to the popularity of tragicomedies and romances in the early modern theater. However, the list also reveals that these robust traditions have remained largely unknown to today's students, critics, and audiences. This can be explained in part by the high loss-rate of plays drawn from romance. But the titles of even extant plays, especially those originally advertised as tragicomedies, are likely unfamiliar to most readers. And yet, tragicomedy and romance mark crucial developments in the history of the English Renaissance theater. These genres lay at the center of important debates about the very nature of theatricality. Even as critics like Sidney mocked or scorned these genres, audiences flocked to see productions that incorporated their tropes and strategies.

We argue implicitly throughout this chapter for a renewed consideration of romance and tragicomedy in light of their broad histories on the early modern English stage. These broad histories have lost some of their significance due to the dominance of Shakespeare's late plays in discussions of tragicomedy and romance. As some critics have argued, understanding the theatrical context of romance or tragicomedy lends essential insight to the study of Shakespeare's plays. True as this is, we would suggest that the conversation shift away from such an author-specific focus. After all, the study of genre teaches us that authors work within rules and structures that precede the individual. Moreover, viewing Shakespeare's plays as an integrated dimension of this dramatic tradition, rather than its privileged beneficiary, enables a fuller and more accurate understanding of theatrical history. Indeed, the rich history of romance and tragicomedy suggests many untapped opportunities for students and critics to explore – both in the context of early modern history and in these genres' engagement with the kinds of cultural and political questions most pressing to our own time.

Table 30.1 English Stage Romances

Play title	Author	Year performed	Year printed	Sources and notes
<i>2 Godfrey of Bulloigne</i>	Unknown	1594	n/a	Lost play
<i>Ariodante and Genevora</i>	Unknown	1583	n/a	<i>Orlando Furioso</i> ; lost play
<i>Arthur's Show</i>	Unknown	c.1597	n/a	Arthurian Legend; mentioned in Shakespeare's <i>2 Henry IV</i>
<i>Baiting of the Jealous Knight (Fair Foul One)</i>	Wentworth Smith	1623	n/a	Unknown; lost play
<i>Chariclea (Theagenes and Chariclea)</i>	Unknown	1572	n/a	Heliodorus' <i>Aethiopica</i> ; lost play
<i>Chinon of England</i>	Unknown	1596	n/a	Arthurian Legend; lost play
<i>Cloridon and Radiamanta</i>	Unknown	1572	n/a	Characters featured in Ariosto's <i>Orlando Furioso</i> ; lost play
<i>Clyomon and Clamydes</i>	Anon.	1583	1599	<i>Perceforest</i> , a French Romance
<i>Common Conditions</i>	Anon.	1576	1576	"The most famous historie of Galiarbus Duke of Arabia" named on title-page – an unknown and possibly apocryphal source
<i>Conquest of the West Indies</i>	John Day, William Haughton, Wentworth Smith	1601	n/a	Unknown source; lost play
<i>Destruction of Jerusalem</i>	Unknown	1584	n/a	<i>Siege of Jerusalem</i> – medieval romance; lost play
<i>Fairy Knight</i>	Dekker and John Ford	1624	n/a	<i>Sir Degare</i> , a Middle English romance, features a Fairy Knight, as does <i>Tom a Lincoln</i> ; lost play
<i>Four Prentices of London with the Conquest of Jerusalem</i>	Thomas Heywood	1594	1615; 1632	Godfrey of Bulloigne
<i>Guy, Earl of Warwick</i>	Ascribed on title-page to "B.J.," but possibly John Day or Thomas Dekker	Performances recorded in 1618 and 1631	1661	<i>Guy of Warwick</i> Tradition; it is unclear whether 1661 records the earlier performances
<i>Herpetalus the Blue Knight and Perobia</i>	Unknown	1574	n/a	Unknown; lost play
<i>Huon of Bordeaux</i>	Unknown	1593	n/a	Popular medieval romance. Early sixteenth-century English translation by John Berners; lost play
<i>1 Godfrey of Bulloigne, with the Conquest of Jerusalem</i> (Possibly an earlier version of Heywood's <i>Four Prentices</i>)	Unknown	1594	n/a	Many medieval and early modern sources with stories of Godfrey; Stationers' Register records a 1594 entry. Play now lost

<i>Invisible Knight</i>	Unknown	1633	n/a	Mentioned in <i>A Bird in the Hand</i> (1633); lost play
<i>Jerusalem</i>	Unknown	1599	n/a	Possibly <i>Siege of Jerusalem</i> (see 1584) or Godfrey of Bulloigne material; lost play
<i>Knight of the Golden Shield</i>	Unknown	n.d.	n/a	Version of <i>Clyomon and Clamydes</i> (?); Listed with printed plays from Goffe, <i>Careless Shepherdes</i> (1656); lost play
<i>Misfortunes of Arthur</i>	Thomas Hughes	1587	1587	Arthurian Legend
<i>Mucedorus</i>	Anon.	c.1590	1598 (sixteen subsequent editions through 1668)	Possibly Sidney's <i>Arcadia</i> , which also includes a character named Mucedorus
<i>Old Fortunatus</i>	Thomas Dekker	1599	1600	German Romance <i>Fortunatus</i>
<i>Orlando Furioso</i>	Robert Greene	1591	1594 and 1599	Ariosto
<i>Palamon and Arcite</i>	Unknown	1594	n/a	Chaucer's <i>Knight's Tale</i> ; lost play
<i>Paris and Vienna</i>	Unknown	1572	n/a	Late medieval French romance by the same title (Caxton printed translation in 1485); lost play
<i>Queen of Ethiopia</i>	Unknown	1578	n/a	Heliodorus' <i>Aethiopica</i> (?) Possibly the same play as <i>Chariclea</i> (1572); lost play
<i>Seven Champions of Christendom</i>	John Kirke	c.1635	1638	Multiple sources
<i>Sir Giles Goosecap, Knight</i>	Anon. (attributed to George Chapman)	1602	1606; 1636	Unknown
<i>Sir John Mandeville</i>	Unknown	1592	n/a	<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> ; lost play
<i>St. George for England</i>	Unknown	Before 1642	n/a	Lost play
<i>The Birth of Merlin</i>	William Rowley (ascribed on title-page to Shakespeare and Rowley)	1622	1662	Arthurian Legend – related to <i>Uther Pendragon</i> (1597) (?)
<i>The Four Sons of Aymon</i>	Robert Shaw (?)	1603	n/a	Medieval romance of the same title – Caxton printed English translation in 1489; lost play
<i>The History of the Solitary Knight</i>	Unknown	1577	n/a	Many Middle English romances feature the figure of the solitary knight; lost play
<i>The Irish Knight</i>	Unknown	1577	n/a	The Irish Knight could possibly be Sir Marhaus from the Arthurian Cycles; lost play

(Continued)

Table 30.1 English Stage Romances (Continued)

Play title	Author	Year performed	Year printed	Sources and notes
<i>The Knight in the Burning Rock</i>	Unknown	1579	n/a	Unknown; lost play
<i>The Knight of the Burning Pestle</i>	Francis Beaumont	1607	1613	Parody of Heywood's <i>Foure Prentises of London</i>
<i>The Life and Death of King Arthur</i>	Richard Hathway	1598	n/a	Arthurian Legend; lost play
<i>The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune</i>	Anon.	1582	1589	Unknown
<i>The Red Knight</i>	Unknown	1576	n/a	Possibly medieval English <i>Sir Perceval of Galles</i> ; lost play
<i>The Seven Wise Masters</i>	Henry Chettle, John Day, Thomas Dekker, and William Haughton	1600	n/a	Version of <i>The Seven Sages of Rome</i> , a popular medieval Romance; lost play
<i>The Soldan and the Duke of ...</i>	Unknown	1580	n/a	Possibly <i>The Siege of Milan</i> , <i>The Sultan of Babylon</i> , or one of the many medieval romances featuring the figure of a Sultan; lost play
<i>The Tempest</i>	William Shakespeare	1611	1623	Among the "comedies" in the First Folio, included today in discussions both of romance and tragicomedy
<i>Titus and Vespasian</i>	Unknown	1592 and 1619	n/a	<i>Siege of Jerusalem</i> – medieval romance (perhaps same as <i>Destruction of Jerusalem</i> (1584)); lost play
<i>Tom a Lincoln</i>	Anon.	1608–15	n/a	Richard Johnson romance of the same title
<i>Trial of Chivalry, with Cavaliero Dick Bowyer</i>	Anon.	1601	1604	Unknown
<i>Tristram de Lyons</i>	Anon.	1599	n/a	Middle English Romance, possibly Malory; lost play
<i>Uther Pendragon</i>	Unknown	1597	n/a	Arthurian Legend; lost play
<i>Valentine and Orson</i>	Anon.	1595, 1598, 1600	n/a	Fifteenth-century French romance; lost play

Plays in this table and the next are taken from several sources: Harbage (1964), Greg (1939–59), Fleay (1891), Ellison (1917), Foakes (2002), Cooper (2004), Hays (1986), and Littleton (1968). We have also extensively utilized three electronic resources for further publication data and source materials for these plays: the Database of Early English Playbooks, Literature Online, and the TEAMS Middle English Text archive.

Table 30.2 English Tragicomedies

Play title	Author	Year performed	Year printed	Source of genre attribution
<i>1 and 2 Arviragus and Philicia</i>	Lodowick Carlell	1635–6	1639	<i>Annals</i>
<i>1 and 2 Crafty Cromwell</i>	Anon.	1648	1648	Title-page
<i>1 and 2 Newmarket Fair</i>	Anon.	1649	1649	Title-page
<i>1 and 2 Passionate Lovers</i>	Lodowick Carlell	1638 (pt. 1)	1655	Title-page
<i>1 The Cid</i>	Joseph Rutter; Pierre Corneille	1637–8	1637	Title-page
<i>2 The Cid</i>	Joseph Rutter; Pierre Corneille	1637–9	1640	<i>Annals</i>
<i>A Knack to Know an Honest Man</i>	Anon.	1594	1596	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Adrasta, or The Woman's Spleen and Love's Conquest</i>	John Jones	1635	1635	Title-page
<i>The Amorous Fantasm</i>	William Lower; Philipe Quinault	1659	1660	Title-page
<i>The Amorous War</i>	Jasper Mayne	1628–48	1638	Title-page
<i>Antonio and Mellida</i>	John Marston	1599–1600	1602	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Arcadia</i>	James Shirley	1640	1640	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Argalus and Parthenia</i>	Henry Glaphorne	1632–8	1639	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Astraea, or Love's True Mirror</i>	Leonard Willan	1651	1651	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Bashful Lover</i>	Philip Massinger	1636	1655	Title-page
<i>Bellum Grammaticale</i>	Leonard Hutton	1582–92	1635	Title-page
<i>The Bondman</i>	Philip Massinger	1623	1624	<i>Annals</i>
<i>A Challenge for Beauty</i>	Thomas Heywood	1634–6	1636	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Claracilla</i>	Thomas Killigrew	1639	1641	Title-page
<i>Cola's Fury, or Livenda's Misery</i>	Henry Burkhead	1645	1646	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Combat of Love and Friendship</i>	Robert Mead	1634–42	1654	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Conspiracy</i>	Henry Killigrew	1635	1638	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Court Secret</i>	James Shirley	1642	1653	Title-page
<i>Cymbeline</i>	William Shakespeare	1608–11	1623	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Damon and Pythias</i>	Richard Edwards	1564	1571	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Deserving Favorite</i>	Lodowick Carlell	1622–9	1629	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Devil's Law-case</i>	John Webster	1617–21	1623	Title-page
<i>The Doubtful Heir</i>	James Shirley	c.1638	1652	Title-page

(Continued)

Table 30.2 English Tragedies (Continued)

Play title	Author	Year performed	Year printed	Source of genre attribution
<i>The Duke's Mistress</i>	James Shirley	1636	1638	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Emperor of the East</i>	Philip Massinger	1631	1632	Title-page
<i>The Enchanted Lovers</i>	William Lower	1658	1658	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The English Traveller</i>	Thomas Heywood	c.1627	1633	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Faithful Friends</i>	Anon.	1660	MS	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Faithful Shepherdess</i>	John Fletcher	1608–9	1610?; 1629; 1634	<i>Annals</i> lists the play as a “pastoral”; Fletcher includes his discussion of tragicomedy in prefatory material
<i>False Favorite Disgraced, or The Reward of Loyalty</i>	George Gerbier D'Ouville	1657	1657	Title-page
<i>The Floating Island</i>	William Strode	1636	1655	Title-page
<i>The Fool would be a Favorite, or The Discreet Lover</i>	Lodowick Carlell	1625–42	1657	Title-page
<i>Fortune by Land and Sea</i>	William Rowley; Thomas Heywood	1607–9	1655	Title-page
<i>The Gentleman of Venice</i>	James Shirley	1639	1655	Title-page
<i>The Grateful Servant</i>	James Shirley	1629	1630	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Great Duke of Florence</i>	Philip Massinger	1627	1636	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Honest Man's Fortune</i>	Philip Massinger; Nathan Field	1613	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Humorous Lieutenant</i>	John Fletcher	1619–25	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Hymen's Triumph</i>	Samuel Daniel	1614	1615	Title-page (“Pastoral Tragicomedy”)
<i>The Imposture</i>	James Shirley	1640	1652	Title-page
<i>The Island Princess</i>	John Fletcher	1619–21	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Just General</i>	Cosmo Manuche	1652	1652	Title-page
<i>A King and No King</i>	Francis Beaumont; John Fletcher	1611	1619	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Knight of Malta</i>	Philip Massinger; Nathan Field; John Fletcher	1616–19	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Ladies' Privilege</i>	Henry Glapthorne	1637–40	1640	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Lady Errant</i>	William Cartwright	1628–38	1637	Title-page
<i>Landgartha</i>	Henry Burnell	1639–40	1641	Title-page

<i>Laus of Candy</i>	John Ford	1619–23	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Lost Lady</i>	William Berkeley	1637–8	1638	Title-page
<i>The Love Crowns The End</i>	John Tatham	1632	1640, 1657	Title-page (1657 only)
<i>Love and Honor</i>	William Davenant	1634	1649	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Love in its Ecstasy, or The Large Prerogative</i>	William Peaps (?)	c.1634	1649	<i>Annals</i> ("royal pastoral" on title-page)
<i>The Love's Dominion</i>	Richard Flecknoe	1654	1654	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Love's Pilgrimage</i>	John Fletcher	1616 (?)	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Love's Victory</i>	William Chamberlain	1658	1658	Title-page
<i>The Lover's Melancholy</i>	John Ford	1628	1629	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Lover's Progress</i>	Philip Massinger	1623	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Lovesick Court, or The Ambitious Politic</i>	Richard Brome	1632–40	1659	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Loyal Lovers</i>	Cosmo Manuche	1652	1652	Title-page
<i>The Mad Lover</i>	John Fletcher	1617	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Maid of Honor</i>	Philip Massinger	1621–2	1632	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Malcontent</i>	John Marston	1602–4	1604	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Match mee in London</i>	Thomas Dekker	1611–13	1631	Title-page
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	William Shakespeare	1604	1623	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Mercurius Britannicus</i>	Richard Braithwait	1641	1641	Title-page
<i>The Noble Ingratitude</i>	William Lower; Philipe Quinault	1659	1659	Title-page
<i>The Noble Stranger</i>	Lewis Sharpe	1638–40	1640	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Osmond the Great Turk, or The Noble Servant</i>	Lodowick Carlell	1622	1657	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Pericles, Prince of Tyre</i>	William Shakespeare; George Wilkins	1606–8	1609	<i>Annals</i> ; title-page: "true relation of the whole history, adventures, and fortunes of the said prince"
<i>Philaster</i>	Francis Beaumont; John Fletcher	1609	1620	Title-page (not until 1695)
<i>The Picture</i>	Philip Massinger	1629	1630	Title-page
<i>The Platonic Lovers</i>	William Davenant	1635	1636	Title-page
<i>The Poor Man's Comfort</i>	Robert Daborne	1615–17	1655	Title-page
<i>The Prisoners</i>	Henry Killigrew	1632–6	1641	Title-page

(Continued)

Table 30.2 English Tragedies (Continued)

Play title	Author	Year performed	Year printed	Source of genre attribution
<i>The Prophetess</i>	John Fletcher; Philip Massinger	1622	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Queen and Concupine</i>	Richard Brome	1635–9	1659	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Queen of Aragon</i>	William Habington	1640	1640	Title-page
<i>The Queen of Corinth</i>	John Fletcher	1616–18	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Queen, or The Excellency of Her Sex</i>	John Ford	1621–42	1653	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Queen's Arcadia</i>	Samuel Daniel	1605	1606	Title-page
<i>The Queen's Exchange</i>	Richard Brome	1629–32	1657	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Renegado</i>	Philip Massinger	1624	1630	Title-page
<i>The Rival Friends</i>	Peter Hausted	1632	1632	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Rogue</i>	Mateo Aleman	N/A	1634	Title-page
<i>The Royal Slave</i>	William Cartwright	1636	1639	Title-page
<i>Sad One</i>	John Suckling	1637–41	1659	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Scottish Politick Presbyterian Slain by an English Independent</i>	Anon.	1647	1647	Title-page
<i>The Sea Voyage</i>	John Fletcher	1622	1647	Printed as a “comedy,” included in current critical discussions of tragicomedy
<i>The Shepherds' Holiday</i>	Joseph Rutter	1633–5	1635	Title-page
<i>The Siege of Rhodes</i>	William Davenant	1656	1656	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Siege, or Love's Convert</i>	William Cartwright	1628–38	1651	Title-page
<i>The Spanish Gypsy</i>	Thomas Dekker; John Ford	1623	1653	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Strange Discovery</i>	John Gough	1624–40	1640	Title-page
<i>The Fair Quarrel</i>	Thomas Middleton; William Rowley	1615–17	1617	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Loyal Subject</i>	John Fletcher	1618	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Royal King and the Loyal Subject</i>	Thomas Heywood	1602–18	1637	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Spanish Bawd</i>	James Mabbe	N/A	1631	Title-page
<i>Trappolin Supposed a Prince</i>	Aston Cokayne	1633	1658	Title-page

<i>Travels of the Three English Brothers</i>	John Day; George Wilkins; William Rowley	1607	1607	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Twins</i>	William Rider	1630–42	1655	Title-page
<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>	John Fletcher; William Shakespeare	1613	1634	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Two Noble Ladies, or The Converted Conjuror</i>	Anon.	1619–23	MS	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Vertuous Octavia</i>	Samuel Brandon	1598	1598	Title-page
<i>A Very Woman</i>	Philip Massinger	1634	1655	Title-page
<i>The Virgin Widow</i>	Francis Quarles	1640–2	1649	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Wandering Lover</i>	Thomas Meriton	1658	1658	Title-page
<i>A Wife for a Month</i>	John Fletcher	1624	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	William Shakespeare	1610–11	1623	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Witch of Edmonton</i>	Thomas Dekker; William Rowley; John Ford	1621	1658	Title-page
<i>Women Pleas'd</i>	John Fletcher	1619–23	1647 (BF fol.)	<i>Annals</i>
<i>The Young Admiral</i>	James Shirley	1633	1637	<i>Annals</i>

NOTES

- 1 Alastair Fowler provides a seminal account of “the function of genre in literature” in *Kinds of Literature* (1982). See also the influential work of Rosalie Colie on Renaissance genres as artistic “resources” in *The Resources of Kind* (1973); Barbara Fuchs’s *Romance* (2004) extends these approaches, and proposes that romance be viewed as a “strategy” that can be deployed in various genres. For an informative view of the interactions of Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean genres, see also Howard (2009).
- 2 Two other plays widely agreed to come from the “late period” of Shakespeare’s career – *All Is True* (*Henry VIII*) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* – are sometimes labeled as romances or tragicomedies. Dowden ([1875] 1967, 405) recognized both plays as being part of this period, but denied their status as romances.

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Part IV
Critical Approaches

Sexuality and Queerness on the Early Modern Stage

Valerie Billing

“Make several kingdoms of this monarchy / And share it equally amongst you all, / So I may have some nook or corner left / To frolic with my dearest Gaveston.” King Edward, the title character of Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II*, speaks these lines to a roomful of rebellious noblemen when he learns that they plan to banish his lover Gaveston from the kingdom ([1593] 2002; 1.4.70–3). When Edward later parts with Gaveston, who is bound for Ireland, he reassures his lover that their separation will be brief: “long thou shalt not stay, or, if thou dost, / I’ll come to thee. My love shall ne’er decline” (1.4.114–15). These passages show frank declarations of love between men; Edward even offers to give up his crown in exchange for the chance to spend his life “frollicking” with Gaveston. It thus might surprise modern readers of the play to learn that it would be misleading to label such scenes as homosexual: scholars generally agree that the categories “homosexual” and “heterosexual” did not exist to differentiate or define people when Marlowe wrote this play in the late sixteenth century. Whereas modern-day westerners define themselves in part by sexual identity – “I am gay,” or “I am straight” – early modern men and women did not link their sexual practices to their identities in such a clear way. And yet, queer studies has nonetheless yielded significant insights into the ways early modern texts represent gender, desire, eroticism, sexual acts, friendship, virginity, and sodomy. This chapter will trace some of these insights, particularly as they relate to the Renaissance stage.

How exactly to define “queer,” and whether we should in fact define it at all, has been a contentious issue in queer studies since its inception.¹ Some shared themes, ideas, and assumptions in early modern queer studies, however, might help in constructing a working definition for the purposes of this chapter. Queer studies in part grew out of gay and lesbian studies in the late 1980s, and has maintained interests in analyzing same-sex desires and relationships in literature by thinking beyond gender binaries, undermining heteronormativity, and uncovering social and cultural constructions of sexuality and sexual identity. Many theorists working in early modern queer studies use the tools of new historicism to trace a history of gender and sexuality, but

others question whether these methods of literary historical analysis can ever capture the complexities of human sexuality and desire. Queer theory has also been influenced by feminist approaches to literature that analyze the organization of patriarchal societies and the people those societies oppress; queer theorists ask when and how expressions of homoeroticism in literature challenge, or uphold, a patriarchal, heteronormative social order. Drawing on methodologies enabled by psychoanalysis, some queer theorists studying the early modern stage investigate the dynamics of desire and anxiety shared among actors, characters, and playgoers, and between the stage and the audience.² Many scholars combine two or more of these methodological approaches.

As these many influences on the field suggest, Renaissance queer studies is a broad field that draws on the methods of many other ways of reading literature, but, in general, it is concerned with understanding textual representations of the sexual practices and desires of the past and with analyzing the links between desire and sexuality, on the one hand, and established social norms or expectations, on the other. To offer a brief history of how queer and sexuality studies have approached Renaissance drama over the past three decades, this chapter begins with an overview of early investigations into Renaissance depictions of sodomy and homoerotic desire, moves on to a summary of several arguments about the normativity of homosocial and homoerotic bonds in early modern English literature, and concludes by pointing toward some new directions the field has recently begun to explore.

Historicizing Homoerotic Desire

The claim that homosexuality did not exist during the Renaissance has its origins in the first volume of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, first published in 1976 (Foucault 1978). Foucault argues in part that individual identity became increasingly tied to sexual practices over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading to the late nineteenth-century development of the psychological and sociological category of the homosexual.³ Foucault's thesis provided the catalyst for an explosion of inquiry into early modern sexualities. Historian Alan Bray, for instance, expands Foucault's claims about early modern sexualities, arguing that although sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English law and religious doctrine condemned sodomy, or sex between men, male homosexual sex nonetheless seems to have been widely practiced (1982, 9). Literary scholar Bruce R. Smith analyzes similar evidence, tracing a thorough history of English laws against sex between men from the late Middle Ages through the early modern period (1991, 40–53). Smith agrees with Bray that sodomy was rarely prosecuted as a crime at all in England; cases of sodomy that were prosecuted involved other social transgressions such as coercion, violence, or inappropriate cross-status relations, rather than only sexual acts by same-sex pairs (Bray 1982, 73–4; Smith 1991, 48–9). Even the definition of sodomy was far from specific in early modern England: according to both Bray and Jonathan Goldberg, the term “sodomy” could refer to sex between men, nonprocreative or otherwise improper sex between a man and a woman, or sex with an animal (early modern English law is nearly silent on sex between women). Goldberg describes sodomy as “anything that threatens alliance – any sexual act, that is, that does not promote the aim of married procreative sex”; as a result, he contends, such sodomitical acts “emerge into visibility only when those who are said to have done them also can be called traitors, heretics, or the like” (1992, 19).

Marlowe's *Edward II* dramatizes the deadly combination of sex between men and social transgression that typifies sodomy discourse. The lines that open this chapter illustrate Edward's intense passion for his lover Gaveston despite the disapproval of the rest of the realm's nobility.

To modern eyes, Marlowe's play might look like a dramatization of homophobic violence: the other noblemen rebel against Edward, depose him, and ultimately murder both him and Gaveston. Goldberg, however, argues that the play depicts Edward's errors as more social than sexual. In the play's opening lines, Gaveston reads a letter from Edward that constructs their relationship on equal terms: "My father is deceased. Come, Gaveston, / And *share* the kingdom with thy dearest friend" (1.1.1–2; emphasis added). In the pair's first scene together, Edward names Gaveston "Lord High Chamberlain, / Chief Secretary to the state and me, / Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man" (1.1.153–5). These titles, as Edward's brother reminds him, far exceed Gaveston's station, and they fatally arouse the jealousy and ire of Edward's powerful high-born peers. Focusing on the word "share" from the opening lines, Goldberg argues that Edward's downfall comes not from his sexual passion for a man, but from his transgression of the social order when he raises Gaveston above his social station (1992, 116).

The play makes this point even more explicit in a conversation between Mortimer Junior, the leader of the rebellious noblemen, and his uncle, Mortimer Senior. Mortimer Sr. speaks a poetic defense of love between men, drawing on classical precedents, as he advises Mortimer Jr. against open rebellion:

The mightiest kings have had their minions:
Great Alexander loved Hephaestion,
The conquering Hercules for Hylas wept,
And for Patroclus stern Achilles drooped.
And not kings only, but the wisest men:
The Roman Tully loved Octavius,
Grave Socrates, wild Alcibiades.

(1.4.390–6)

The younger Mortimer responds that his uncle has misunderstood him; he is not concerned with Edward and Gaveston's sexual relationship, but rather has become incensed by Gaveston's social climbing and what he sees as Edward's mismanagement of the realm's resources:

Uncle, his wanton humor grieves not me,
But this I scorn, that one so basely born
Should by his sovereign's favor grow so pert
And riot it with the treasure of the realm,
While soldiers mutiny for want of pay.

(1.4.401–5)

Mortimer Jr. dwells on Gaveston's status as "basely born" and scoffs at Edward entertaining Gaveston's expensive tastes rather than maintaining his army. His indignation soon turns to the way Gaveston flaunts his status as the king's favorite by dressing above this station:

He wears a short Italian hooded cloak,
Larded with pearl, and in his Tuscan cap
A jewel of more value than the crown.
Whiles other walk below, the King and he
From out a window laugh at such as we,
And flout our train, and jest at our attire.

(1.4.412–17)

Goldberg calls this speech “an extraordinary moment in the play” that separates sexual acts from social transgressions (1992, 117). Mortimer Junior brushes off Edward and Gaveston’s sexual relationship and frames his opposition to the pair as a reaction to their laughter at his clothing. Attention to Edward’s assassination at the play’s end, however, challenges Goldberg’s optimistic view of the play’s treatment of love between men: in an act of highly sexualized violence, the hired murderer forces a red-hot spit into Edward’s anus. Edward’s death reconnects the sexual and the social with its violent staging of anal intercourse when the murderer commits treason by killing the king, suggesting that the sexual and the social are not so separate in this play after all.

Smith, who traces the history of antisodomy laws in England, explores another realm of contact between the sexual and the social by situating the legal discourse against sodomy in uneasy relation to a much more widespread Renaissance discourse of male friendship, which was influenced by classical philosophy (1991, 33–40). For queer theorists, *friend* is an erotically charged word that surfaces repeatedly in Renaissance drama when men express their affection for each other.⁴ When Gaveston reads Edward’s letter in the opening lines of the play, he reads about friendship: “My father is deceased. Come, Gaveston, / And share the kingdom with thy dearest *friend*” (1.1.1–2; emphasis added). Antonio of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (c.1596) similarly pronounces his love for Bassanio with the language of friendship as he faces execution. Earlier in the play, Antonio had taken a loan from the moneylender Shylock in order to fund Bassanio’s venture to woo and marry the wealthy Portia. Though Bassanio succeeds, Antonio finds himself unable to repay the debt and, according to the terms of the bond, must pay Shylock with a pound of his flesh. On the verge of paying this debt with his life, Antonio bids Bassanio farewell by positioning himself in opposition to Portia as Bassanio’s greater love:

Commend me to your honourable wife.
Tell her the process of Antonio’s end.
Say how I loved you. Speak me fair in death,
And when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love.
Repent but you that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt.
(4.1.268–74)⁵

The word “friend” here follows closely on “love,” eroticizing the bond between the two men as well as the death Antonio embraces for Bassanio’s sake. Fortunately for Antonio, Portia arrives – cross-dressed and disguised as a lawyer – in time to save him from his punishment, but unfortunately for Antonio, the play’s ending divides him from Bassanio by resolutely pairing Bassanio with Portia. A sense of loss caused by the dissolution of this passionate, idealized friendship hangs over the play’s ostensibly happy heterosexual ending.

The discourses of sodomy and male friendship provide two ways for talking about same-sex desire before the concept of a homosexual identity existed. Renaissance scholars generally agree that *homosexuality* is an anachronistic term, so theorists working in queer and sexuality studies of the period often use *homoerotic* or *same-sex* to describe the acts and desires they analyze. They have shown that the gay/straight binary is our own social construction, and they seek cues to the construction and representation of sexual practices and identities in the past through literary texts and the performances they represent. Queer theory illustrates that sexuality and desire are not universal, but rather are informed by complex and nearly invisible erotic ideologies, or shared cultural beliefs. One task of the queer theorist is to locate these hard-to-find ideologies

and interrogate the ways in which texts uphold or disrupt them. As we will see in the next section, queer theorists have found fruitful material in Renaissance drama, showing how frequently it represents erotic desires and acts deemed unacceptable in everyday early modern life.

Gender Fluidity and the Transvestite Theater

The English Renaissance theater was unique among its Continental counterparts for its use of male actors to play all roles, including female roles, which were played by boys. This phenomenon, which scholars have found difficult to explain – no laws existed against women’s acting, for instance, and women from traveling Continental troops acted on English stages – has led some scholars to label the Renaissance theater an “all male” or “transvestite” theater, though Natasha Korda has contested this label. Korda presents evidence that women worked in the theater in a number of capacities, including procuring and altering costumes, gathering money at the door, and selling refreshments during performances (see Korda, Chapter 21 in this volume). Nonetheless, a stage that showcased only male bodies invites queer readings of the homoerotic potential enabled by boys and men acting out scenes of love and desire, and modern scholars are not alone in seeing the potential for homoeroticism in Renaissance playhouses. Early modern moralists, often today called *antitheatricalists*, penned lengthy treatises outlining the many vices of the theater, including sodomy. Phillip Stubbes, for instance, writes that after a play ends, “everyone brings another homeward of their way very friendly, and in their secret conclaves (covertly) they play the sodomites, or worse” ([1583] 2004, 121). Stubbes, in other words, worries that watching two boys or men kissing on the stage will inspire in the male spectator the urge to kiss a boy or a man.

Laura Levine analyzes a wide range of antitheatrical tracts from 1579 to 1642 to argue that their writers fear, even more than sodomy, that theater effeminates both male actors and male spectators. Levine argues that antitheatrical writing evinces the fear that gender identity is unstable and that a man who improperly enacts masculinity – who, for example, enjoys watching boys and men entertain him on the stage – will become like a woman (1994, 6–7). In making this argument, Levine builds on both Judith Butler’s (1999) thesis of gender as constituted by an unending series of performed acts, and on the new historicist work of Stephen Greenblatt (1988), who reads both Renaissance drama and popular folktales alongside medical discourses influenced by Galen. Galen, a Greek physician who lived during the second century CE, proposed a “one-sex model” of human sexuality that at least some early modern physicians adopted: these physicians understood women’s reproductive parts as an inversion of male reproductive parts, a penis and testes inverted inside the body. This one-sex model of human sexuality suggests that the two genders are not structurally different in any significant way and leads Greenblatt to argue that Shakespearean comedy might dramatize erotic conflict between male and female characters, but the reality of exclusively male bodies on the stage showcases what he calls the “open secret of identity” (1988, 93) – that all bodies are structurally male.

Greenblatt’s and Levine’s arguments introduced the concept of early modern *gender fluidity*: that gender on the early modern stage can be read as negotiable and constantly shifting. Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1602), for instance, stages gender fluidity through its main protagonist, Viola, a young woman shipwrecked in a strange land who decides to dress as a boy and present herself as a page to Orsino, the local duke. This woman dressing as a boy is, of course, played by a boy actor, meaning that the play stages multiple layers of cross-dressing and gender

impersonation. The play uses the character Cesario, the name Viola assumes when she becomes a male page, to expound on the particular charms of the boy actor, whether he plays a male or a female role. Other characters feel erotic attraction to Cesario for his androgynous beauty and seductive vocal skill, traits Orsino praises in his first scene with Cesario: “Diana’s lip / Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe / Is as the maiden’s organ, shrill and sound, / And all is semblative a woman’s part” (1.4.30–3). Cesario’s main task in Orsino’s household is to woo for him the lady Olivia, an heiress who has forsworn men but who, Orsino correctly imagines, might admit an androgynous boy into her household. Indeed, Olivia agrees to speak with Cesario after hearing her steward describe him as somewhere between youth and adult, man and woman: “’Tis with him in standing water between boy and man. He is very well-favoured, and he speaks very shrewishly. One would think his mother’s milk were scarce out of him” (1.5.141–4). By the end of their first scene together, Olivia has fallen madly in love with Cesario for his verbal wit and good looks. Viola/Cesario continues to visit Olivia’s house, and the scenes these two characters share dramatize homoeroticism on two levels: two female characters acted by two boy actors court each other with an intense verbal, and probably also physical, erotic connection. Such erotic doubling presents boys and boy actors as universal objects of desire, appealing to both male and female spectators.⁶

Numerous Renaissance plays dramatize this universal appeal of the boy actor through cross-dressing. Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene* (1609) opens with a character named Boy who tells his master Clerimont about an encounter he has just had with Lady Haughty – whose love Clerimont has sent him to solicit – and several of her ladies:

The gentlewomen play with me, and throw me o’the bed, and carry me in to my lady; and she kisses me with her oiled face and puts a peruke o’my head and asks me an I will wear her gown, and I say no; and then she hits me a blow o’the ear and calls me innocent, and lets me go. (1.1.12–17)

Like Cesario, who gained easy access to Olivia’s personal chambers, the Boy in *Epicoene* functions as an erotic plaything for Lady Haughty, who evokes theatrical conventions when she tries to cross-dress him. In Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl* (1611), a young woman, Mary, dresses as a pageboy to elope with her fiancé Sebastian. Sebastian greets the cross-dressed Mary with a kiss, saying, “methinks a woman’s lip tastes well in a doublet” (4.1.50). The joke, of course, is that Mary is played by a boy actor, and boys offer a different set of charms than women. John Lyly’s *Gallathea* (1588) features a double cross-dressing plot: two female characters played by boy actors, both cross-dressed as boys to escape their village’s sacrifice of beautiful virgins, fall in love with each other. Even when their female genders are revealed at the play’s end, they remain steadfast in their love. The goddess Venus offers to turn one of them into a man so that they can marry, but she never reveals which one and the play ends before the transformation actually occurs. This play has clear homoerotic themes; Christian M. Billing reads it as contesting Levine’s arguments about gender fluidity in the way that it glorifies the beauty of the boy actor. According to Billing, the double cross-dressing plot stresses “the beauty, desirability and sexual availability of Lyly’s adolescent actors over and above the female characters they personated” (2008, 62–3). In other words, it is the boy actors’ inability to switch genders that eroticizes the relationship they enact on the stage and eroticizes them in the eyes of the audience. Across these plays, the boy actor’s capacity to play many gendered roles makes him desirable to male and female characters and, potentially, to male and female audience members alike.

Renaissance Homonormativity

In the early 2000s, queer studies scholars began to look to the social and cultural norms and attitudes encoded in Renaissance drama and to use their discoveries about these norms to revise the historical narrative of sexuality proposed by Foucault. Laurie Shannon analyzes Shakespearean comedy alongside emblem books and treatises on friendship and natural law in order to argue that sameness, rather than difference, was valued in affective relationships in early modern England. In other words, although a modern cliché for love is “opposites attract,” Renaissance texts of diverse genres depict like seeking like. Shannon argues that heterosexual coupling appears in early modern texts as necessary for social reproduction and is normative as a hierarchy, but such coupling also defies dominant Renaissance ideals of union based on likeness (2000, 185–6). Shannon terms this idealization of likeness *Renaissance homonormativity* and argues for a Renaissance worldview that believed “affiliation, affinity, and attraction normally proceed on a basis of likeness, a principle of resemblance strong enough to normalize relations between members of one sex above relations that cross sexual difference” (187). According to Shannon, Shakespeare’s comedies, far from endorsing heteronormativity in a modern sense, utilize “tropes of likeness” such as same-sex “friendship, twinning, and disguise” in order to make marriage “plausible or even thinkable in parity terms” for a culture with a homonormative, rather than a heteronormative, worldview (187). Of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, for instance, she argues that Orsino chooses Viola/Cesario as his envoy to Olivia “to make use of a homonormative principle of affect and attraction that he supposes will make Olivia more receptive” than she has been to his other messengers (207).

Bach expands on this thesis of Renaissance homonormativity. Bach argues that Renaissance drama exhibits a strong aversion to heterosexual sex, reserving heterosexual desire for clowns, fools, servants, and women, while valorizing same-sex friendships between noble male characters (2007, 2–5). For instance, Bach cites the Clown in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, who pursues sex with the shepherdess Audrey and makes numerous jokes about women’s sexual infidelity, as a figure modern critics often see as “representing a typical man even though he is clearly depicted as a clown, a social position miles away from nobility” (4). She cites other clowns in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* who also lust after women and joke about cuckoldry, in contrast to the noblemen characters of these plays who prioritize their bonds with male friends. The king and his three lords in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, for instance, swear off contact with women in the play’s first scene in order to devote themselves to an all-male enclave of education. As they one by one acknowledge to the audience that they have fallen in love with the visiting princess and her three ladies, they try to hide these feelings from their male companions. Once the men have all discovered each other’s love, they still remain a tight-knit foursome and woo their ladies as a group, disguising themselves as Russian entertainers to visit the ladies’ camp (5.2). At the play’s end, the princess and her ladies depart without having married or had sex with the king and his lords, while the company learns that either the clown Costard or the debased Spanish nobleman Armado has impregnated the rustic wench Jaquenetta. Such examples lead Bach to argue that “for men who would be perceived as noble or gentle, male sexual desire for women was seen as a poor alternative to male–male bonds (homosociality)” (2007, 7). Even as the king and his lords court the ladies, they maintain their primary allegiance to each other, whereas the clown and the comical nobleman entangle themselves in a sexual love triangle with a woman.

Adding to a history of sexuality pursued by Foucault and others, Bach theorizes a modern “heterosexual imaginary” that “values heterosexual sexual intercourse for pleasure, values men’s sexual desire for women, and sees women as naturally less desirous than men” and which, over the course of the long eighteenth century (1660–1800) replaced a Renaissance “homosocial imaginary” that valued the bonds of male–male friendship and saw women as more sexually desirous than men (2007, 2, 9). Bach argues that although Shakespeare’s plays were composed in a culture with a homosocial imaginary, they were edited and rewritten beginning in the eighteenth century to make them conform to the values of the developing heterosexual imaginary (3). In this way, Bach traces a history of heterosexuality as an ideology, or a cultural belief that is so strong that most members of the culture believe it to reflect the natural order, that came into dominance after the Renaissance. She argues that neither marriage nor sex between a man and a woman, both of which are acts, are the same as heterosexuality, which is an ideology. *Twelfth Night*, for example, ends with the marriage of Olivia to Sebastian, Viola’s twin brother. Throughout the play, however, the strongest expressions of love and affection pass between Sebastian and his male friend Antonio. When asked his name, Antonio identifies himself in terms of his love for Sebastian: Antonio declares himself “One, sir, that for his love [for Sebastian] dares yet do more / Than you have heard him brag to you he will” (3.4.281–2). When Sebastian and Antonio are reunited in the final scene, Sebastian, despite having recently married Olivia, expresses passionate joy at finding his lost companion: “Antonio! O, my dear Antonio, / How have the hours racked and tortured me / Since I have lost thee!” (5.1.210–12). This declaration of love from a recently married man accords with Bach’s theory of a Renaissance homosocial imaginary that privileged homosocial relations and separated marriage and procreative sex from the bonds of strong affection. Although many scholars read Antonio as excluded from the play’s comic ending because he does not marry, he reunites so passionately with the man he loves that the play leaves open the possibility that their relationship, whether homosocial or homoerotic, might continue throughout Sebastian’s marriage to Olivia. Like Shannon’s theory of Renaissance homonormativity, Bach’s homosocial imaginary demonstrates the early modern preference for likeness over difference. Both concepts ask students and scholars of Renaissance drama to rethink our modern assumptions about sexual and affective norms and historicize attitudes toward sameness and difference, and together they illustrate a key tenet of early modern queer studies: that sexuality and desire are historically and culturally constructed and far from static across time and place.

Further Directions in Renaissance Queer and Sexuality Studies

The previous sections described some of the major trends in how scholars in queer and sexuality studies have read Renaissance drama from the 1980s through the early twenty-first century. This section takes up some of the most recent concerns and directions in the field, including female homoeroticism, sexual practices, and unhistoricism. Some of the scholarship discussed so far considers female homoeroticism, but an overwhelming proportion of early queer readings of Renaissance drama focus on male subjects and male same-sex desire. Valerie Traub contests a widespread scholarly assumption that little evidence survives of early modern female homoeroticism. Traub acknowledges that medieval and early modern English culture considered women’s desires for women “improbable, impossible, insignificant,” but she argues that nonetheless “such desires were culturally practiced and represented in a variety of ways” (2002, 6). For instance,

whereas Billing (2008) reads *Gallathea* as celebrating the homoerotic appeal of the boy actor, Traub's analysis of the play highlights its lesbian erotics. Traub argues that this play participates in the Renaissance tradition of representing women's homoeroticism as *amor impossibilis*, or impossible love, while nonetheless turning that tradition on its head: the love between Gallathea and Phyllida in this play *is* possible, as suggested by the play's ending that matches the two women together while leaving the promised sex change for one of them unaccomplished (2002, 327–8). Traub also reads Olivia and Viola/Cesario's relationship as a powerful expression of lesbian erotics. She argues that Viola/Cesario, dressed in men's attire, takes "obvious delight in playing the erotic part of the man. Both the enjoyment with which she stands in for Orsino in wooing Olivia and the extent to which she elicits Olivia's desire carry a potent homoerotic charge" (56). Traub shows that the play's most poetic and erotic language occurs in the scenes Viola/Cesario and Olivia share, arguing that "it is as object of another woman's desire that Cesario finds her own erotic voice" (57). In *Twelfth Night*, a play usually analyzed in terms of the male-oriented erotics of the boy actor playing a woman dressed as a boy, Traub finds a celebrated female homoeroticism in Olivia and Viola/Cesario's courtship.

Melissa Sanchez adds nuances to the dynamics of female-oriented queer erotics by analyzing the often contradictory approaches of feminist and queer scholarship side-by-side: feminist approaches to Renaissance texts, Sanchez contends, frequently idealize "nurturing and egalitarian same-sex relations" between women, an approach that looks limiting from the perspective of queer theory because it "sees not only heterosexuality but also any eroticization of power as incompatible with feminist aims" (2012, 493). Rather than dismissing what she calls the "perverse and undignified sex" in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as simple misogyny, for instance, Sanchez argues that the play's perverse erotics "help us to recognize the alterity and diversity of early modern sexualities" (494). For instance, Sanchez analyzes Helena's desire to submit herself to the domination of Demetrius, her male love interest, as a queer desire that "resists injunctions to proper maidenly behavior" (502): Helena begs Demetrius, "Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me, / Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave, / Unworthy as I am, to follow you" (2.1.205–7). Helena's masochistic desires and refusal to accept Demetrius' "no," Sanchez asserts, align her more with the desiring male subject of the Renaissance sonnet tradition than with proper femininity, thereby "blur[ring] the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, abjection and aggression" (2012, 505). At the same time, Sanchez points out that "use" carried connotations of sexual intercourse in Shakespeare's time, meaning that Helena's plea that Demetrius "use me but as your spaniel" also suggests not only dominance and submission but also bestiality (505). Since bestiality was a part of what constituted sodomy during Shakespeare's time, Helena's reference to role-playing as a spaniel connects her desires to male homoerotic practice as well. Helena's cross-sex desire for Demetrius begins to look more queer than it does heterosexual as it usurps masculine prerogatives of desire and gestures toward bestiality and sodomy. The female-oriented erotics Sanchez analyzes illustrate how female desires that refuse to accord with feminist assumptions about good and healthy femininity can provide essential tools for queer analysis.

As Sanchez' article suggests, queer theorists who study Renaissance drama have recently taken an interest in depictions of sexual practices that might not appear strictly homoerotic or homosexual but that register as queer in their resistance to the expectations of heteronormativity. Bromley and Stockton seek to uncover early modern sexual practices through essays that pursue the question: what did sex look like in early modern England, and how was it represented in literature (2013, 3)? By way of example, Will Fisher's essay in the collection traces the erotics of

one practice that is likely unfamiliar to modern audiences and readers: “chin chucking,” or the gentle stroking of someone else’s chin or cheek. Fisher argues that this gesture was certainly seen by early moderns as amorous, and it was often, depending on the context, perceived as sexual (2013, 143–5). Furthermore, he argues that chin-chucking in visual art and literary texts establishes the chucker as the dominant partner and the recipient of the gesture as the receptive one, whether the pair is same-sex or cross-sex: Claudius pinches Gertrude’s cheek in *Hamlet* and King Edward strokes Gaveston’s in *Edward II* (150). *Twelfth Night* offers the opportunity for Orsino to stroke Viola/Cesario’s face as he praises the youth’s androgynous beauty: “Diana’s lip / Is not more smooth and rubious” than Cesario’s (1.4.30–1). Chin-chucking, an act that fails to register on a modern scale of erotic practices, provides rich opportunity for queer analysis when Fisher calls our attention to this practice’s early modern significance.

In privileging the study of sexual practices over queer identities or history, Bromley and Stockton participate in another recent direction for early modern queer studies: unhistoricism. While their collection is in some ways highly historical – many of the essays rigorously historicize sexual practices – the collection also questions our modern tendency to read history as inevitably leading to the present by seeking to understand early modern sex not as a precursor to modern sex, but rather on its own terms as occurring within a particular sociocultural framework; as the editors state in their introduction, the collection “contributes to a history of sexuality that both includes and exceeds a history of sexual identity” (2013, 8–9). This type of analytic practice, which does not privilege the Foucauldian narrative so central to the queer scholarship that seeks to historicize, or tell the history of, sexuality, is called *unhistoricism*. Vin Nardizzi, Stephen Guy-Bray, and Will Stockton articulate some of the concerns, stakes, and goals of unhistoricism: “we want to combat the restrictions of a historicist approach in our engagement with Renaissance materials – restrictions that show up in the by-now ritualized statements that ‘of course, there was no homosexuality back then’ – and the restrictions of a utilitarian approach to our findings” (2009, 1). The ritualized statements to which they refer are found in much scholarship on Renaissance drama and stem from Foucault’s thesis that sexual identities are a modern phenomenon that developed during the nineteenth century. Nardizzi, Guy-Bray, and Stockton elaborate, stating that

while history is important to us, we do not use it as a way of ending discussions and ruling out interpretations; we refuse to let our backward gazes be restricted either by the fetishizing of historical accuracy or the needs of contemporary gays and lesbians – needs that have in any case too often been assumed to be monolithic and easily summarized. While historical research has shown us that the past is difficult to know, queer theory has shown us that the present is equally so. (2009, 2)

The collection’s authors pun on two meanings of “fetish” – both a highly venerated object and an object that elicits a habitual erotic response – to critique historicist scholarship by suggesting that such scholarship limits itself with its careful adherence to historical accuracy.

Nardizzi, Guy-Bray, and Stockton envision their collection as freeing queer scholarship focused on the Renaissance from some of the parameters that have traditionally governed it, especially the imperative to distance the past from the present in order to avoid universalizing claims that would supposedly invite charges of anachronism. This approach is strongly influenced by Menon (2008; 2011). Menon argues that “our embrace of difference as the template for relating past and present produces a compulsory heterotemporality in which chronology determines identity” and, consequently, “Even when it is ostensibly studying homosexuality, then,

historicism rejects homo tendencies that violate knowing distinctions between times and desires” (2008, 1). Menon calls this common way of reading *heterohistory* and differentiates it from her own approach, called *homohistory*, which “posits a methodological resistance to sexuality as historical difference” (2). In other words, Menon argues for reading in concert with the past by moving away from the tendency to understand a chronological or teleological march toward modern sexual identities. Menon suggests Shakespeare as an ideal figure for such a project because his texts exist in both the past and the present: the continual reading, performing, and studying of Shakespeare across the centuries “exemplifies what it means to cross time and chronological history” (5). In a chapter that criticizes the teleology – or investment in a chronological narrative that leads inevitably from past to present – of heterohistory, Menon argues that Shakespeare’s narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* advocates for failure as the opposite of teleological success. With Adonis’ premature death, the poem dramatizes arousal and desire without the sexual consummation that modern readers expect from heterosexual coupling. Menon relates this expectation to heterohistory by calling the poem’s refusal to depict penetrative consummation an “undermining of teleological desire” (40). This reading could also apply to the numerous Shakespearean comedies that end just short of marriage: *Twelfth Night* stalls Viola’s marriage to Orsino because they cannot locate her women’s attire, *Much Ado About Nothing* delays the weddings with a dance, and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* postpones any future amorous activity for one year. Modern directors, audiences, and readers who value teleology in both history and desire might stage and understand these endings as heterosexual closure, but Menon’s analysis suggests that they dramatize the failure of closure while enabling possibilities for endless desire.

As a way of reading that analyzes sexuality and desire through many different lenses, queer theory offers the study of Renaissance drama numerous rewards. Queerness on the Renaissance stage shows that sex and sexuality have a history and are influenced by and mediated through social and cultural factors. Renaissance drama presents us with boys on the stage playing women, cross-dressed characters who inspire both male and female desire, and passionate declarations of love between friends of the same sex. Queer theory helps us analyze a range of early modern sexual practices that appear in literary texts, some more and some less identifiable to the modern eye. And even as queer theory seeks to historicize sexuality as a fluid and changeable force, it distances itself from some of the methods of historicist analysis. Renaissance drama continues to suggest new directions for queer theory, and queer theory continues to lend new tools for understanding queerness and sexuality on the Renaissance stage.

NOTES

- 1 Two helpful introductions to the field of queer theory and its terms are Jagose (1996) and Sullivan (2003).
- 2 Traub (1992) remains one of the most important book-length studies combining psychoanalytic and queer methodologies in a study of the Renaissance stage.
- 3 Foucault argues that ancient, premodern, and early modern societies saw sodomy as a “category of forbidden acts” and those who committed sodomy as lawbreakers, whereas “the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood. ... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (1978, 43). This distinction separates sodomitical acts, on the one hand, from homosexual sexual identity, on the other.
- 4 Scholarship on male friendship has been highly influenced by Sedgwick (1985) and Bray (2003).
- 5 All Shakespeare citations are from Greenblatt (1997).
- 6 For more on the erotic appeal of the boy actor, see Shapiro (1994); Orgel (1996); Fisher (2001); and Masten (2006).

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Gendering the Stage

Alison Findlay

The relationship between gender and performance that preoccupied early modern dramatists has continued to produce a fascinating, wide-ranging debate among critics. The so-called “corporeal turn” in Renaissance studies and a renaissance of queer theory inspired by Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990a) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) has seized on the idea of gender as performative, but often without paying adequate attention to the distinctive differences of performance on stage. This chapter cannot offer a comprehensive account, or in-depth context, to unpick a grand narrative of gender, sexuality, and identity, but by studying examples from 1554–1638, it considers how early modern drama articulates the complexities of gendered identity within a theatrical framework: interrogating stereotyped behavior for men and women, biological essentialism, and performativity. The importance of boy players and female actors will be addressed as vital elements in the multifaceted representations of sexual difference.

From the very beginning of Elizabeth I’s reign, gendering the stage was a complex process. When Elizabeth passed through the streets of London on January 14, 1559, the day before her coronation, Richard Mulcaster recorded that the city was “a stage wherin was shewed the wonderfull spectacle, of a noble-hearted princesse toward her most loving people” (Nichols [1788–1823] 2014, 1: 118). Her interaction with pageants and speeches that idealized her allowed her to harness the power of dramatic self-representation in order to establish herself politically. In addition to kissing the Protestant English Bible as a “boke of Truth” given by the Mayor (139), Elizabeth’s improvisations with individuals in the crowd demonstrated her commitment to those “whom I must in the middest of my royaltie nedes remember” (134). In Cheapside she took a sprig of rosemary from a poor woman as a token of remembrance about her promises to the poor and smiled at a comment on her resemblance to Henry VIII (138).

Elizabeth’s gender complicated attempts to fashion her as part of an exclusively masculine Protestant Tudor dynasty. At the far end of Cornhill she was celebrated as a “prince of pe[e]rles fame” by a boy “representing the Que[e]nes highnes” and “crowned with an Imperiall crowne” (124).

Elizabeth dominated the spectacle by virtue of her position as monarch but she was doubly defined as male: by the title of prince, and by the mode of performance. Although she was a queen, her powers of self-representation were circumscribed like those of other women in her kingdom, who were obliged to work alongside or within a series of traditionally masculine institutions, including the all-male professional theater companies. In these circumstances, a survey of how the stage was gendered must take account of examples of nontraditional venues: spaces like the street, the royal court, the household arena, in order to explore how a female theatrical aesthetic developed in conjunction with and in distinction from more familiar forms of drama.

Before Elizabeth was crowned, the dangers of becoming a sacrifice to male political conflicts had been amply demonstrated by the fate of her Protestant predecessor, Lady Jane Grey, the “nine-days queen,” and by a play, *Iphigenia at Aulis* (c.1554), translated from Greek into English by Jane Grey’s cousin, Lady Jane Lumley. The script, which exists in a single manuscript, is the earliest English example of a female author re-gendering the stage for domestic and political purposes. Lumley lists “the names of the spekers,” suggesting either a live reading or performance, perhaps at her family home, Nonsuch.¹ Critics have noted similarities between the fate of Jane Grey, who was sacrificed by her Catholic relatives to put Mary Tudor on the throne, and the sacrifice of Iphigenia by her father, Agamemnon, in Lumley’s translation of Euripides’ tragedy (Hodgson-Wright 1998, 133–5). Whether or not Lumley intended her play to comment critically on her family’s political manoeuvres, its heroine is celebrated for moving into the public realm and appropriating the role of hero. Iphigenia refuses to be saved by Achilles (or to marry him), declaring she will “offer my selfe willingly to deathe for my countrie” (ll. 818–19). Since Elizabeth I visited Nonsuch in 1559, perhaps Lumley’s text was the piece staged there by St Paul’s Boys, who did have a play called *Iphigenia* in their repertoire (Wynne-Davies 2007, 80–1). The script’s lessons about self-sacrifice for “the commoditie of my countrie” (ll. 809–10) and the necessity of asserting female identity in the public realm were ones Elizabeth certainly followed.

The Queen’s visit to Norwich in 1578 demonstrated her skill in promoting a female agenda within male-authored street pageants.² Elizabeth defied the script’s initial attempt to define her relationally as the “daughter Queene” of “Most happy fathers Kinges” (Nichols [1788–1823] 2014, 2: 792) and exploited opportunities to magnify her queenly persona. The figure of Gurgunt, King of Britain (373–354 BCE), mounted and in armor, threatened to overwhelm Elizabeth with the weight of patrilineal tradition. His oration of greeting drew parallels between them based on Elizabeth’s descent from Henry VII and Henry VIII, assuring her that, in spite of physical differences, “Yet great with small comparede, will like appeare anone” (791). As Deanne Williams (2007) observes, size mattered to Elizabeth I. Whose glory is greater and whose smaller is left ambiguous in the speech, but Elizabeth did not wait to hear it. “By reason of a showre of raine which came, hir Maiestie hasted away, the speech not uttered,” the record notes (Nichols [1788–1823] 2014, 2: 790). Deftly utilizing the English weather, Elizabeth dodged the comparison to the superhero king and moved on to a pageant of weavers in which *she* was dominant, both physically and due to her rank.

The St. Stephens Pageant was far more suited to Elizabeth’s diplomatic fashioning of her glory. A painted image displayed a matron and two or three children with the motto “*Good nature chaungeth qualities*,” while “Upon the stage there stode knitting at the one ende eyght small women children spinning Worsted yarne . . . in the mydde of the sayde stage stood a prettie Boy richly apparelled, which represented the Common wealth of the Citie” (793). The staging centralized the contribution made by women’s labor, while its use of “small women children” and

the “prittie Boy” served to aggrandize Elizabeth. The effect was not lost on her: “she paricularye viewed the knitting and spinning of the children” (794), presumably displaying the contrast between herself and these diminutive subjects. The next pageant countered the overwhelming patrilineal legacy figured by Gurgunt by representing a triumvirate of female biblical figures from Elizabeth’s iconography: “Debora,” “Iudeth,” and “Esther,” followed by “Martia, *sometime Queene of Englande*” (795), daughter-in-law of Gurgunt and author of the *Lex Martiana* (Barefield 2003, 26). It is hardly surprising that Elizabeth preferred to bypass the figure of Gurgunt in favour of Martia, and then to bask in Martia’s praise of her as a “mightie Queene,” a “Paragon of Present time” revered by all previous monarchs, by Apollo and the gods (Nichols [1788–1823] 2: 798).

Elizabeth I’s eccentric role as queenly usurper of a traditionally masculine sovereignty was addressed on the commercial stage in Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1605) and the allusive romance of *The Fair Maid of the West, Part I* (1599). *If You Know Not Me*, written after Elizabeth’s death, glorifies her in exaggeratedly feminine terms as a Protestant saint in the style of John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* (1563). Like her predecessor Lady Jane Grey, Princess Elizabeth patiently resigns herself to imprisonment in the Tower of London with the words “A Virgine and a Martyr both I dy” (Heywood 1605, sig. B4v). She humbly dedicates herself “to huswiffry” (sig. D3v) and longs to change places with the “poore Milk-maid” (sig. F2). Angels, her prayer book, and her Protestant Bible defend her so that, as Jean Howard argues, by hyper-citation of Foxe, “a dead woman with ‘no bodie’ was made into a recognizable ‘some bodie’ on the Jacobean stage through the help of the boy actor” (2005, 277).

In contrast, Heywood’s *The Fair Maid of the West, Part I*, written when Elizabeth was on the throne, engages with the paradox of the woman-on-top. While overtly denying direct comparisons between the aged queen and Bess, a sixteen-year-old character played by a youthful boy, the play uses a romance plot to stage and to manage the challenges posed by the Queen regnant. Bess walks a tightrope, combining unconventional actions and stereotyped feminine virtue. As Jennifer Higginbotham has shown, the script’s subtitle “a girl worth gold” plays on the linguistic and cultural fluidity of the word “girl” at the turn of the century that allows Bess to slip between terms and categories (2011, 192). Bess demonstrates commercial expertise and financial independence as the owner of a profitable public house, yet rigidly maintains the modesty required of a woman confined to the domestic sphere: “beyond that compass / She can no way be drawn” (1.2.60–2). When assaulted by Roughman, she cross-dresses to put down the braggart in a fight, but excuses her behavior as a defense of her household:

Let none condemn me of immodesty
Because I try the courage of a man
Who on my soul’s a coward; beats my servants
Cuffs them, and, as they pass by him, kicks my maids
Nay, domineers over me, making himself
Lord o’er my house and household.

(2.3.27–32)

Bess’s protection of herself and her household looks forward to Moll Cutpurse’s wonderful defense of women, when, in Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl* (1611), she overcomes Laxton (3.1.89–110) and champions her sex in a powerful rebuttal of male assumptions that all women are sexually insatiable, defining them instead as the victims of financial necessity and male lust.

The revelation of Roughman's cowardice in *The Fair Maid of the West, Part I* is comic, although Bess's strength as a woman-on-top, "Lie down / Till I stride over thee" (2.3.72–3), hints at an underlying insecurity which troubles the men around her. Roughman remarks, "I was ne'er so put to't since the midwife / First wrapp'd my head in linen" (3.1.13–14), suggesting that Bess's assertive behavior reduces him to infantile dependency. Her male attire gives her "manly spirit" (2.3.5) but unmans him. The traditionally dominant position occupied by the male is in danger of being stripped of its difference from the inferior female position. Janet Adelman (1992) examined such a collapse in psychological terms as a return to the symbiotic relationship with the mother, whose presence threatens to suffocate the male figure's sense of individual identity. In Bess's reduction of a rough man to a baby swaddled by a midwife, the play comically hints at the consequences of Queen Elizabeth's powerful rule as mother of her country.

Bess's decision to captain a ship takes the cross-dressed heroine into an exclusively masculine territory of military competition, recalling Elizabeth's purported claims to the "heart and stomach of a king" at Tilbury (Hibbert 1990, 221). Queen Elizabeth's questionable legitimacy as a ruler is signaled by her dramatic avatar's status as a pirate. When Bess captures and plunders a Spanish ship, demanding that the crew "pray for English Bess," the Spaniard assumes she means "your queen, / Famous Elizabeth" (Heywood [1599] 1968; 4.4.121–2). Such privateering was effectively legalized as a means of weakening Catholic (Spanish) forces and enriching England's royal purse under Elizabeth's rule, until James tightened the laws. As Clare Jowitt observes, by glorifying Bess's conquests as a cross-dressed pirate, the play transforms her "from a romance-style character to one full of epic prowess" (2010, 120). It skillfully masks the idea that Elizabeth has plundered the crown from its male owners with a more immediate political critique of her naval champions, Essex and Raleigh, who had failed to capture the Spanish fleet in the Azores in 1597 (123).

Since biblical authority forbade men to wear women's clothes and women to wear male attire, specifically armor (Deuteronomy 22:5), the military woman is usually shown as demonic or unnatural, "a tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" (*Henry VI Part 3*, 1.4.138). Bess's romantic dedication to Spencer diffuses the threat by situating her quest within the popular ballad tradition in which maids cross-dressed to follow their lovers into battle (Heywood [1599] 1968; 2.3.13). Spencer's reappearance promises a happy resolution for Bess: "we'll see thee crown'd a bride" (5.2.147). The romantic plot thus plays out what was lacking in the maiden queen, the marriage destiny and marital containment that Queen Elizabeth had refused. Nevertheless, hints of an excessive female energy continue to unsettle the ending of *Part I* with comic surprise. When Bess asks the Moorish king of Fez to favor her "brave" Spencer, the king exclaims, "see him gelded to attend on us. / He shall be our chief eunuch" (5.2.92–3). Bess's actions threaten to castrate the hero and reduce him to dependence on her "constancy" (5.2.121) and her acceptance of the submissive position accorded to woman.

If, as *The Fair Maid of the West, Part I* suggests, gender cannot be securely fixed by clothing or by traditionally gendered activities, perhaps the surest way of demarcating the sexes on stage was through representations of an essential biological process: reproduction. Although the female body was absent from the public stage, the boy actor's performance of pregnancy could signify womanhood, and, implicitly, the subjection to male authority which was part of Eve's punishment. Representation was apparently not a problem; dramatists entrusted boys to play various stages of pregnancy in plays as diverse as *A Woman is a Weathercock*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Winter's Tale*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *Women Beware Women*, for example. Using the biological "certainties" of reproduction to secure the gender hierarchy on which early modern patriarchy

relied was much more problematic, however, as can be seen from Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (c.1613). As Natasha Korda observes, the play "foregrounds the rampant reproduction, rather than destruction of illegitimate wares, which is associated with the unconstrained reproduction of illegitimate children" (2011, 191). Middleton creates sexual "types" who jostle against each other in this fertile but anarchic environment to reveal that, as Mario DiGangi observes, dramatic conflicts over sexual agency are often "symptomatic of conflicts over gender" (2011, 6) and social or economic agency. Touchwood Senior boasts to the audience, "I am the most unfortunate in that game / That ever pleased both genders: I ne'er played yet / Under a bastard" (Middleton [c.1613] 2007; 2.1.54–6).

Gaming is a metaphor for sex, the real gamble of the comedy. Touchwood's spin on the word "bastard" (an illegitimate child and the losing card at the end of the game) recognizes insecurity at the foundation of patriarchy. The female reproductive body could not be controlled any more naturally than male sexual appetites, and biological paternity could not be proved or denied. The comic scenes where the Country Wench accuses Touchwood Senior of fathering her child, receives payment from him, and then tricks the Promoters into caring for it, demonstrate "she that hath wit may shift anywhere" (2.2.148). Female flesh literally outwits the masculine word of law and the Promoters lament "half our getting must run in sugar-sops and nurses' wages now" (2.2.194–5).

Marriage, the institution designed to contain the regenerative female body, was just as leaky as the female body itself since the child of a married woman was assumed to be her husband's unless non-access or impotence could be proved. This gave rise to the proverbial saying "who bulls the cow must keep the calf" (Tilley 1950, C674; Findlay 1994, 24–5); its legal truth lies behind the play's central riddle, as expounded by Tim: to "prove a whore to be an honest woman" (Middleton [c.1613] 2007; 4.1.38). As Robert Burton observed, rather sarcastically, under English law "married women are all honest" ([1621] 1964, 138). Uncertain paternity within marriage is a classic example of masculine anxiety as "a necessary and inevitable condition" of early modern patriarchy as theorized by Mark Breitenberg (1996, 2). First it reveals "the fissures and contradictions of patriarchal systems" and, paradoxically, it also "enables and drives patriarchy's reproduction and continuation of itself." In Middleton's play, cuckoldry undermines masculine autonomy but it is also the basis of strong cooperative bonds between men, as in the arrangement between Sir Walter Whorehound, the lover of Mistress Allwit, and her husband. Allwit proclaims his is the "happiest state that ever man was born to!" (1.2.19–22), yet others are anxious on his behalf. A servant observes "he falls to making dildoes" (1.2.60), hinting at his sexual inadequacy as well as his singing. Sir Walter despises Allwit, claiming he has lost the "soul's pure flame" of manhood (2.2.41–2). Allwit's cuckoldry has frequently been read as a failure of masculinity. Bruce Bohrer, for example, argues that Allwit's "charactonym" presents him negatively as "all mind, no libido," a man in denial of the "abdication of his own manhood as figured through the exercise of domestic authority in general and sexual authority in particular" (2001, 180). Korda, likewise, reads Allwit as the epitome of "the effeminizing vice of idleness" (2011, 190).

There is, however, something in Middleton's satiric portrayal that "crackles with vitality and a spirit of play" as Linda Woodbridge recognizes (2007, 907). The comedy vigorously celebrates Allwit's delight that Sir Walter Whorehound's sexual patronage alleviates Allwit of another masculine anxiety, namely the financial burden of maintaining a household. Whorehound "pays the nurse / Monthly or weekly; puts me to nothing, / Rent, nor church duties" and Allwit can rid himself "of fear / Lie soft, sleep hard, drink wine and eat good cheer" (1.2.129–30). Jennifer Panek

argues that early modern audiences may, likewise, have read wittolry in positive terms, “not as a lack or loss of domestic control but as a particularly secure kind of power over one’s wife” (2001, 67). From this perspective, Allwit’s charactonym advertises his skill, his supreme wit, in managing the unruly territory of female fertility to his own advantage, diverting Whorehound’s wealth into the open market of the merchant classes. Allwit’s business sense is accompanied by the value he places on sensory pleasure, on “excellent cheer” (1.2.24), “cloth of tissue cushions” and “a close stool of tawny velvet” (5.2.62–6). All give him happiness. Phenomenological approaches have drawn attention to the connection of physical, emotional and social drives, an ecology of the passions which are “are at home in the self” but are simultaneously “transactions with a social and physical environment” (Paster 2012, 151). Reading beyond patriarchal anxiety opens up affirmative readings of gender in Middleton’s comedy.

The impregnation of Lady Kix by Touchwood Senior, for example, is motivated by physical drives that simultaneously serve the passions of the aptly named lover, the emotional needs of Lady Kix, and the social environment. As well as providing a longed-for heir for Sir Oliver, adultery serves to transform Lady Kix from “nothing of a woman” (3.3.84–5) because she has no child (2.1.135), into a full member of the community. Middleton carefully shows that since only maternity confers identity and status, the gossiping where “everyone gets before me” (2.1.167) is a painful occasion for her.

The gossiping scene (3.2) materializes emotions as bodily in origin quite literally in the happy event of childbirth. Although everyone on stage is male, the direction for Mrs. Allwit’s bed to be “*thrust out*” centers the female body as a site where emotional, physical, and social appetites converge. This is a significant way of gendering the stage since the birthing room was usually a closed, all-female space, its secrets guarded by a community of sisterly visitors (Cressy 1997, 55–9). Offstage birth scenes in *The Duchess of Malfi* and *All is True, Pericles*, and *The Life of the Dutches of Suffolke* construct spectators as anxious male attendants. The gossips’ meeting in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, however, recreates men, on stage and off, as transvestite spectators, while many women spectators would have been able to laugh knowingly from the privileged position of those with experience of the real event. As Janelle Day Jenstad notes, the luxurious provision for Mistress Allwit’s confinement parodies the lying in of the Countess of Salisbury, wife of Sir Robert Cecil, and advertises the diversion of funds to the merchant classes through the commercial context of Gresham’s Burse (2004, 390) (1.2.32–5). The festive scene of consumption thus amply dramatizes how emotions are “influenced by social and environmental factors inside and outside the embodied self” (Paster 2012, 150). The carnival atmosphere generates sympathetic laughter for failure as well as celebration of productivity. The Puritan Mistress Underman, for example, falls drunkenly off her stool and then moralizes the incident as a “common affliction of the faithful” to “embrace our falls” (3.2.181–6). Joking in sisterly fashion about the subjection of Eve reveals a humorous and indulgent underside to the strict Puritan community. The gossips also share intimate secrets such as concern over a nineteen-year-old daughter’s bedwetting, a detail which characterizes the women as leaky vessels (Paster 1993, 23–63). Tim’s entry to the room to be fed plums caricatures male loss of self-control over the body. He is alarmed at being “served like a child, when I have answered under bachelor” (3.2.146) as the gossiping reaches out with an all-consuming embrace to nurture and to correct.

Female confinement is presented more negatively in the romantic plot of *A Chaste Maid*, where Moll is inevitably an object of exchange, even in a stolen match (1.2.196–200). The claustrophobic household contracts to the coffin in an opposite direction to the expansive birth-room scene, and the mourning for Moll’s supposed death explicitly challenges parental greed in matchmaking.

If, as is probable, *A Chaste Maid* was written for a combination of adult and boy actors from Lady Elizabeth's Men and the Queen's Revels, then Moll and Touchstone Junior's fates could have given the play a darker tragicomic tone.

Lisa Jardine notes that in tragedies, the boy actor's presence is effaced by identification (1983, 23). The powerful cry of Webster's protagonist, "I am Duchess of Malfi still" ([1612] 2009; 4.2.141) in her "last presence-chamber" (4.2.69) depends for its tragic effect on a sense of female integrity, not awareness that a boy actor "lies" behind the role. Indeed, Rowley and Middleton remarked that the Duchess was so "lively body'd in thy play" as to raise tears in the audience (Webster [1612] 2009, 78–9). Janet Adelman (1999) has shown that the so-called "one sex" model, derived from Galen (Laqueur 1990), did not hold much sway in vernacular medical texts of the period, which showed more interest in differences between male and female bodies. On a commercial stage populated by men and boys, woman is thus always an absent presence, conjured by the script and by the skill of actors like the boy whose performance of Desdemona in Oxford in 1610 led Henry Jackson to refer to both actor and character as feminine in his account of the production. Although "she always acted her whole part supremely well," he notes, after her death "she implored the pity of the spectators by her very face" (Orgel 1996, 32). Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* likewise relies on complete confidence in the boy actor to personate the Egyptian queen dying with an asp at her breast, rather than seeing a parody of herself in Rome in "some squeaking Cleopatra" who will "boy my greatness" (5.2.216).

Peter Salllybrass remarks that at such crucial moments, we are presented with contradictory attitudes about sexuality and gender: firstly, gender as a set of prosthetic devices, and, conversely, gender as the "given" marks of the body, signs of absolute difference. On the commercial stage those signs are always located "upon another body," that of the boy actor (1992, 73–4). The paradox of presence and absence is seen in *The Duchess of Malfi* where the truth of the Duchess's pregnancy is hidden by her "loose-body'd gown" (2.1.68). Bosola teases the midwife for knowing "the trick how to make a many lines meet in one centre" (2.2.24–5), but of course at the center of the staged Duchess is the absence of the full womb. In such cases, "the fetishistic signs of presence are forced to confront the absences which mark the actor's body" (Salllybrass 1992, 71). The paradox is a source of play in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, where the boy actor and the character of Beatrice-Joanna whom he plays construct Alsemero's fantasy of the ideal, chaste wife theatrically by performing the symptoms of virginity provoked by the liquid in a glass inscribed with the letter "M." By sneezing, gaping, and then falling into a "dull, heavy and lumpish" melancholy (4.1.52), the character mimics what the boy actor would have to do to perform female virginity (4.2.136–47).

A performance imagined or realized beyond the commercial stage could engender a tragic experience fully embodied by female actors. Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* ([c.1607] 2000) opens with the heroine declaring her emotions publicly, debating her responses to each turn of the plot and refusing to adopt an antic disposition to perform for her husband (3.3.47–8). Such unguarded representation costs Mariam her life and, even in a "safe" household playing arena, she experiences self-division, imagining a fight between the persona she identifies with, and the womanly model which Herod and patriarchal society expect of her:

Had not my self against my self conspired,
 No plot, no adversary from without,
 Could Herod's love from Mariam have retired,
 Or from his heart have thrust my semblance out.
 (4.8.9–12)

Mariam's dominance of the stage usurps Herod's political and theatrical primacy and she is banished from Act 5, her execution reported by a Nuntio, as in Jane Lumley's *Iphigenia*. Nevertheless, Mariam's tragic determination to affirm a lasting integrity, a mind which "for glory of our sex might stand" (4.8.39) is a bold female articulation of gender-wholeness, a goal which male tragic heroes also strive for. The performance of ambition and authority in a world governed by giddy fortune constantly challenges the masculine sense of self. Macbeth dares "do all that may become a man" (1.7.46) and sends up "each corporal agent" (1.7.80) to murder Duncan but, having seized the crown, the hypermasculine hero lives in "restless ecstasy" (3.1.49–50). Fleance's escape makes a mockery of Macbeth's attempt to be "perfect / Whole as the marble, founded as the rock" (3.4.20–1). Manhood, as constituted in early modern England, is a fleeting illusion. It is, as Macbeth comes to realize, "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing" (5.5.25–7).

Laura Levine's pioneering work showed how cross-dressing on and off stage disfigured the signs constituting gendered identity and exposed an "unmanageable anxiety that there is no such thing as the masculine self" in early modern England (1994, 24). The precarious foundations of manhood upon bodily signifiers such as the beard (Fisher 2006) or deep vocal register (Bloom 2007), or cultural signifiers such as the sword were inevitably put into play by their theatrical display onstage. Ben Jonson's *Bartholemew Fair* ([1614] 2012) satirizes the antitheatricalists' complaints against the ungodly blurring of genders as ridiculously exaggerated in the caricatured puritan, Zeal of the Land Busy:

Busy. You are an abomination: for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male.

Puppet. *Dionysius.* You lie, you lie, you lie abominably ... It is your old stale argument against the players, but it will not hold against the puppets; for we have neither male nor female among us. And that thou may'st see, if thou wilt, like a malicious purblind zeal as thou art!
[The puppet takes up his garment.]

Edgworth. By my faith, there he has answered you, friend – by plain demonstration.

(5.5.77–86)

Leatherhead uses the puppet to critique Busy's lack of theatrical awareness, implicitly arguing that any normal spectator can distinguish between art and life and read theatrical costume as simply that. In such cases, as Judith Butler argues, theater offers a "safe" containment of categories since one can say "this is just an act," and that even transvestite theater which constitutes "a modality of gender that cannot be readily assimilated into the pre-existing categories of gender reality" refers back to a "discrete and familiar reality in which genders are distinct" (1990b, 278). The puppet's threat of "nothing" does not relate to a dissolution of gender boundaries, but an absence of gender distinction without performance. In early modern England, gender was not insecure because of a belief that the sexes were biologically very similar. Even the anatomist Helkiah Crooke's observation that "women whose voyces turne strong or have beards and grow hairy do presently change their parts of generation" is based on crossing boundaries of difference (1615, 250). Rather, in a culture founded on sexual difference, the reiteration of that difference had to be constantly replayed or re-cited, so as to reinforce the huge psychological and social responsibilities carried by men in order to fulfill their role as the dominant sex, and the huge sacrifices and self-restraint accepted by women in order to maintain difference and make the system work.

Theatrical performances which highlighted the reiteration of difference thus articulated a common understanding that personal style, clothing, deportment, speech, coiffure, produced gender. The artifice of such a process was made especially obvious when boy actors in the children's companies played adult male roles, or when they played transvestite roles in the adult companies, personating female characters who cross-dressed as men, alongside the adult male actors. It is impossible to pin down the effects since the sexual dynamics shift from moment to moment, inevitably differing in each performance and for every spectator. Nevertheless, productions which draw on early modern theater practices, particularly boys' companies, have illuminated ways in which the scripts feature the performativity of gender. For example, Edward's Boys, directed by Perry Mills, have revived several plays written for boys' companies, including John Lyly's *Galatea*, performed in 1588 by the Boys of St Paul's.³ In the 2014 performance the casting of schoolboys aged between eleven and eighteen, maximized the gender complexities of the plot in which two fathers disguise their daughters Galatea and Phillida as boys to prevent them being sacrificed to Neptune, and the cross-dressed heroines subsequently fall in love ([1591] 2012; 3.2.56–66). When a senior boy playing Venus promised to turn one of the girls into a man, but deferred this “till they come to the church door” (5.3.185), the fragility of boyhood as a temporary state of gender fluidity was strongly telegraphed. Such an effect is invoked more pointedly at the end of Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, where the hero-apprentice Rafe dies on stage rehearsing his adventures and bidding his fellow actors “Farewell, all you good boys in merry London” ([1613] 1986; 5.320). The theatrical poignancy of this speech was realized in Peter Reynolds' 2014 revival with a cast from Guilford Boys' Grammar School in Australia. The senior boy playing Rafe, surrounded by the company of “apprentice” schoolboy actors, celebrated the idealism of youth with hope for the future and a simultaneous recognition that the extravagance of play-time was over, and was short as the life of any member of a boys' company.

In plays written for children's companies, the boy actors' subversive recitations of the key tropes of manhood undoubtedly produced comic effects, which revivals by Reynolds and Perry have helped to illuminate. The 2014 staging of Rafe's heroic exploits, especially his confrontation with a diminutive, schoolboy giant Barbarossa, produced much festive hilarity. Reynolds' 2012 boys' production of Ben Jonson's *Epicene or the Silent Woman* ([1609–10] 2012) had a sharper satiric tone in performance, in keeping with Lucy Munro's observations on the play in performance (2005, 92–5). Conventional signs of virility such as commanding speech, financial control, swordplay, and the materializing of masculinity through beards are all subverted by theatrical and metatheatrical parody, played to the full by the boys in Reynolds' 2012 production. *Epicene's* wonderful *coup de théâtre* reveals that the eponymous heroine, who turns out not to be silent at all, is a performance by a boy character, mirroring the reality (or fiction) of “her” representation on stage by the boy actor. The play's denouement is obliquely telegraphed in the opening scene, where Clerimont's boy “ingle” reports that he has been dressed up as a woman by the Collegiates (1.1.1–22), reminding spectators that all the characters are played by hermaphroditic, beardless boys. The prosthetic construction of woman is highlighted in the description of Mistress Otter (4.2.84–97) and in Epicene's reminder to Morose that he has not “married a statue” or a puppet “with the eyes turned with a wire” (3.4.35–7). The deconstruction of masculinity is enacted by Morose, who vainly attempts to reassert control over his house by appearing “with a long sword” (4.2.114), and then “the two swords” (4.7.1) that La Foole and Daw are not men enough to handle. Ultimately Morose is obliged to profess himself “no man” (4.4.42) and to relinquish his fortune to Dauphine in order to escape marriage.

In theatrical terms, the revelation that Epicene is a boy does not dissolve the marriage. Rather, it confirms that, for all the flamboyant displays of manhood, the identities of Morose and his fellow characters must return to the boy actors with whom they are indivisibly yoked. Mark Albert Johnston (2007) has shown, moreover, that the removal of Cutbeard's and Otter's disguises as patriarchs of divinity and the law is no less significant in deconstructing male identity. Dauphine "*pulls off their beards and disguises*" (5.4.208) but in a troupe of boy actors, both Cutbeard and Otter would already be characterized by wearing beards. Indeed, Dauphine says he has "dyed their beards" (5.1.2). When the disguise beards are removed, revealing either more false beards (a double layering which Johnston thinks would not work in practice) or the boy actors' smooth faces, "the gender stability and putative authority" of all the men on stage is exposed as artificial. It is an equalizing gesture showing that the play "privileges neither men nor women" (2007, 417–18) but the boy actors who can be defined only by a "third term" where gender is established through performance.

Jonson's *The New Inn* ([1629] 2012) and Richard Brome's *The Demoiselle* ([1638] 2012) both reuse *Epicene's* trick of cross-dressing to fool the audience but within adult companies, the King's Men and Queen Henrietta's Men, respectively. Both plays feature cross-dressed characters called "Frank" played by boy actors whose gendered performances unaccountably shift register, and so can no longer be contained "safely" within the realm of playing. In *The New Inn* Frank is introduced as a beggar boy, the adopted son of the Host. He is dressed up as "Laetitia" by Lady Frances Frampul, to impersonate her long-lost sister and fool her suitors. Lord Beaufort falls for the beautiful bait and marries "Laetitia." At the end of the play a series of unmaskings outwits the audience and all but two of the characters.

The Host and the ladies unmask Frank as "a counterfeit mirth and a clipped lady" (5.4.48), only to be upstaged by an Irish beggar-woman who testifies that Frank is her daughter, so the marriage can stand (5.5.14). In this second revelation, the figure of Frank/Laetitia offers a fantasy of social integration and moral reform in the possibility of a cross-class match. A third unmasking finally reveals Laetitia as the cross-dressed character s/he was playing: the daughter of the estranged Lord and Lady Frampul (who had themselves been disguised as the Host and Irish Beggar-woman). The "true Laetitia" collapses the transvestite possibilities, and with them the social and political transgressions. Only Prudence, the lady's maid, is able to rise above her birth and marry into the nobility, and even her transformation to a lady is illusory. When Lady Frampul criticizes Pru's failure to read her mistress with the sisterly insight of a lady, the character begins to remove her gown revealing the boy player's body, and protesting "I will not buy this play-boy's bravery / At such a price, to be upbraided for it / Thus, every minute" (4.4.320–2). With this reflexive gesture, the performer acknowledges that transcending his class, sex and the commercial theater to be a real lady in his own right is no more than a fantasy.

Brome's *Demoiselle* seems to be deliberately constructed as a mirror image of Jonson's text, in that his "Frank" is a cross-dressed boy, the son of a ruined knight, Brookeall. The "Rifling" (or raffling) of the *Demoiselle's* virginity is a moneymaking project set up by the knight Dryground, who disguises himself as a Host and offers to help Frank, in atonement for his crime of impregnating and abandoning Brookeall's sister. Unbeknown to the audience, the *Demoiselle* is a fiction, the fantasy of Dryground's lost bastard daughter. Like Jonson, Brome uses the transvestite to critique the commodification of woman and the corrupt capitalist world of self-interest, of which Caroline London offered notable examples. Frank represents woman as an idealized savior who can redeem the whole city:

Faire Chastity
Sits Crowned on her Brow, with an aspect
May beat Lust down to Hell, from whence it rose.
(5.1.981)

The most extreme conversion is of Wat, the villainous usurer's son, who condemns the prostitution of the *Demoiselle* and declares he will "take a Beggar, / And joyn in trade with her, though I get nothing" (5.1.931). Brome substitutes a real child for the fantasy transvestite child to explicitly rewrite Jonson's pessimistic conclusion. Because Wat declares himself willing to marry the beggar Phillis, he is rewarded by the revelation that she is Dryground's real bastard daughter at the end of the play. Uncasing Brookeall's son Frank, Dryground declares "His Sonne's my Daughter" (5.1.1004), little knowing that his real bastard daughter has shadowed Frank's symbolic status throughout the play, begging to gain a dowry and getting her donors to compete in alms, almost as they would in dice. When Phillis steps into Frank's place, the fantasy of redemption can be sustained. From the perspective of the early modern audience, however, "she" looks no different from the "Frank" who has just been uncased. "She" is still an illusion created by the boy actor. The play wryly acknowledges that its optimism for reform may be just as fantastic in the real world outside the theater.

In both *The New Inn* and *The Demoiselle*, "Frank" is a fantasy child, a figure for a lost ideal wholeness whose indeterminate identity as both a boy and a girl is, as Marjorie Garber remarks, "the ultimate 'transvestite effect,'" the "signifier that plays its role only when veiled" (1992, 92). Reading both Franks in terms of the Lacanian model of comic phallic fetishism situates them as the equivalent of Lacan's third term which exceeds and evades the conventional masculine and feminine positions of "having" or "being" the phallus, by "seeming" or "appearing." To quote Lacan, the transvestite performer is "the intervention of a 'to seem' that replaces the 'to have' in order to protect it on the one side and to mask its lack in the other" (1977, 289). The gender-swapping Franks enact the undecidability of castration, an illusion of originary wholeness. Such wholeness is a fantasy, and by superimposing different performances of gender or "seeming" to trick the audience, these plays radically question the boundaries of playing and being within the safe fictional arena of the stage in order to suggest that there is no final referent for "sex"; that sexuality is performative. In both plays, the gender of "Frank" is what Baudrillard would call a simulacrum, "never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (1988, 170). The boy actor is there behind both male and female roles, but remains ambiguous, unreadable.

In *The New Inn*, Lovel is told that Frank "prates Latin / An 'twere a parrot or a play-boy" (1.3.4–5), yet the "hidden" Frank is simultaneously, within the world of the play, a girl. Frank's identity in *The Demoiselle* is equally ambiguous; Dryground calls his supposed daughter both "Maid" and "Frank" (3.1.430). To audiences, both these "Franks" are unreadable. Neither is perfectly Frank: they point to a perfection of gender (either male or female) which is absent, beyond the stage. Indeed, in *The New Inn* Frank is called "My Lady Nobody" (2.2.55), signifying both the lack of a female performer (no/body) and her/his fantastic nature.

The transvestite does, however, create the possibility of reading the female body in positive rather than negative terms, opening a space in which we can move beyond Freud and Lacan, to where female subjectivity and desire can be articulated affirmatively. The unstable signifier of "Frank" undoes binary oppositions of male subject and female object. For the heroines of *The*

New Inn, entry into the symbolic order is an unusual process. In Act 2, scene 2, Jonson creates a mirror effect by placing the cross-dressed Frank opposite her/his real sister, Frances.

Lady F. Is your name Francis?
Frank Yes.
Lady F. I love mine own the better.
Frank If I knew yours
 I should make haste to do so too, good madam.
Lady F. It is the same with yours.
Frank Mine then acknowledgeth
 The lustre it receives by being named after.
Lady F. You will win upon me in complement.
Frank By silence.
Lady F. A modest and a fair well-spoken child.
 (2.2.19–26)

At one level Frank/Laetitia is playing the deferential social inferior or younger sister, as befits convention (although in the latter case we have a fascinating example of an all-female construction of female subjectivity). At another level, we see a redefinition of woman as lack. Lady Frances is constructed as the primary subject and the apparently male “Frank” is a second copy, who “acknowledgeth / The lustre it receives by being named after,” and who plays feminine modesty and silence. This inversion of normal gender roles continues when Lady Frances creates a projection of her desires for agency by cross-dressing Frank as Laetitia, the woman with a phallus, in order to gull her suitors in the Court of Love. Frank/Laetitia, who appears to “have” the phallus, is the catalyst which allows Lady Frances to acknowledge and express her passion for Lovel. As we have seen, this arena also inspires Prudence to perform as queen of the Court, and ultimately provides the gateway to a cross-class wedding with Lord Latimer.

In *The Demoiselle* subject and object positions, masculine originals and female copies are reworked by the elusive eponymous character. The name “Frank” and his/her French education link female agency and performance to the figure of Henrietta-Maria. Frank’s strangeness (as an alien in terms of nationality and gender – neither fully male nor fully female) exposes the English commodification of women. As Lucy Munro notes, the name may also allude to Francis Kynaston, whose Museum Minervae offered education in French fashions (2010, 32; Howard 2007, 186–8).⁴ In the comic subplot, the Demoiselle coaches Magdalen Bumpsey and her daughter Jane in courtly French deportment, promising “I’ll artifice you” (5.1.900)

for the Art of dressing, setting forth
 Head, face, neck, breast, with which I will inspire you.
 To cover, or discover any part
 Unto de best advantage.

(5.1.901–4)

Here drag subversively repeats gender so as “to promote a subversive laughter in the pastiche-effect of parodic practices in which the authentic and the real are constituted as effects” (Butler 1990a, 146). Frank shows how all women reproduce themselves as artifacts, effectively constructing themselves from the transvestite viewpoint of the male gaze.

The danger here is that femininity is always “drag” even when performed by a woman because masculinity is the norm and the original. However, in Brome’s play the transvestite’s Tiresias-like knowledge leads him into a discussion of male artifice which inverts subject/object positions and presents men dressing to please the gaze of the Other. The Demoiselle’s lesson on how to “cover, or discover any part / Unto de best advantage” (5.1.904) shows men imitating the feminine arts of performance, and reveals their anxiety to authenticate themselves through artifacts. On the fashion of bare neck and shoulders, Frank declares:

’T has been suggested by invective men,
 Women, to justify themselves that way,
 Began that fashion. As on t’other side,
 The fashion of men’s brow-locks was perhaps
 Devised out of necessity, to hide
 An ill-graced forehead, or besprinkled with
 The outward symptoms of some inward grief,
 As, formerly the saffron-steeped linen,
 By some great man found useful against vermin,
 Was ta’en up for a fashionable wearing.

(5.1.899–908)

“Saffron-steeped linen,” or yellow ruffs, were, of course, a form of masculine attire adopted by some aristocratic women against which complaints were made in the 1620s. Frank goes on to comment that men adopted millinery styles of narrow- or broad-brimmed hats and the fashions of short trunk hose silk stockings or longer ankle-length breeches to display “beauty” or conceal “defects.” Magdalene asserts “the men / Took that conceit from us,” proudly showing her own “*swaddled leg*” (5.1.911). Competition over costume, the ultimate artifice, functions as a metaphor for a comic battle of the sexes over primary subjectivity and self-determination. Who is copying whom, who is the original inventor of artifice? Magdalene exclaims “Good lack! What knowledge comes from forraigne parts?” (5.1.911). The knowledge that comes from foreign (male) parts, the Demoiselle’s revelations about male fashions, is that these are performative constructs too. Magdalene’s “Good lack!” defines her sex as the positive originators of performative gender and men as the secondary imitators of such acting. The irony of the conversation is obviously increased on stage where the “original” women are all artificially represented. Brome’s male transvestite Frank thus mirrors Jonson’s original female Frank to prove that both are signifiers demonstrating the undecidability of signification. Both show it is impossible to be perfectly Frank.

Brome’s preoccupation with female performance responded to an explicit regendering of the stage by the inclusion of female actors in Court dramas (McManus 2002; Ravelhofer 2006). Henrietta-Maria had built significantly on the tradition of female masque performance developed by Anna of Denmark in work like Jonson’s *The Masque of Queens* ([1609] 2012). Structurally, Jonson’s entertainment enacts the banishment of monstrous male imitations of women by female performers. In the antimasque, professional male actors *played* Hecate and her hags, demonizations of female power which haunted the Jacobean Court like the ghost of Queen Elizabeth (Meskill 2005, 198). These fantastic night-terrors are exorcized by royal and aristocratic women who *are* embodiments of queenly power and virtue, celebrated in the House of Fame. The moral message that “that ‘real’ women are, or should be” virtuous “like the masquers” (Gossett 1988, 99) is supplemented by the assertion that female performance is virtuous and theatrically

powerful. Jonson's printed text concludes that there is no fitter epilogue "than the celebration of those who were the celebrators" and gives the names of the masquers (Jonson 2012: 641–2). His wish to reinvigorate his text by naming the royal and aristocratic women performers testifies to the significance of a female presence on the Court stage.

Nevertheless, the difficulties of representing female authority on stage persisted, as evidenced by Aurelian Townshend's masque *Tempe Restored* ([1632] 1995), presented by Queen Henrietta-Maria and her ladies. The antimasque's enchantress, Circe, was played by a woman, Madam Coniack. In a fully embodied echo of both Ophelia's mad scene in the first quarto of *Hamlet* and Moll Cutpurse's appearance on the stage of the Fortune, Madam Coniack confounded theatrical and cultural expectations by singing to her lute and accusing her young lover "thou hast made a cruel prey of me" (l. 102). The text conventionally allegorizes Circe as "desire" (l. 298), but it defies antitheatrical fears that a woman on stage has a powerful effeminizing effect on spectators by placing responsibility in the eye of the beholder. Circe's "Fugitive Favourite" states explicitly "it is consent that makes a perfect slave" (l. 83). The masque's radical reconfiguration of gender ultimately fell short because Madam Coniack's spectacular performance, presenting a complete woman, was superseded by a main masque which detached the ideal female body and voice (Gough 2003). Mrs. Shepherd presented Harmony "Not as myself" (l. 145) but as resident in heaven's "brightest star," the radiant figure of Divine Beauty, danced silently by Queen Henrietta-Maria. Even though Circe challenged the male masquer playing Pallas with the words "Man-maid, begone!" (l. 268), the masquing house did not resolve the dichotomy between woman as silent beauty and roaring witch.

To act the main speaking role of Bellessa in Walter Montagu's lengthy pastoral *The Shepherds' Paradise*, Henrietta-Maria built a theater in the courtyard at Somerset House. She and her ladies played all 3,858 lines in both male and female roles, reversing the transvestite tradition of the commercial stage ([1633] 1997, vii–xv). The production drew on an appropriation of pastoral by female aristocratic writers and performers. Entertainments for Queen Elizabeth by Lady Elizabeth Russell and Mary Sidney Herbert reconfigured relationships between women and the land; Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* (c.1614–19), Rachel Fane's household entertainments (c.1630), and Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley's *Pastorall* masque (c.1645) regendered the genre (Findlay 2006, 66–109). Henrietta-Maria's production of *The Shepherds' Paradise* rewrote the conventions of exclusive patriarchal government in the state and on the stage by creating a matriarchy over which she presided as the fictional Queen Bellessa and as producer of the performance. The play is set in Gallica, a protectorate within the King of Castille's domain whose queen is elected "by the plurality of the sisters voyces, from wch election the brothers are excluded" (Montagu [1633] 1997, 732–3). The paradise, whose subjects are bound to chastity, celebrates the platonic ideals of Henrietta's Court at Somerset House as a dependent yet semi-autonomous entity. Bellessa's vow "To keepe the honor & the Regall due: / without exacting any thing that's new" (719–20) modestly refers to the queen's current position as consort and, more subversively, invokes a tradition of autonomous female rule going back to the Virgin Queen. Bellessa's modesty is disingenuous in theatrical terms. The exclusive, costly production made a mockery of the text's communist utopia but its gender politics were radical. Henrietta-Maria's all-female performance of *The Shepherds' Paradise* broke every rule in the book, as William Prynne's notorious condemnation of female acting in *Histrion-Mastix* (1633) showed.

Prynne's objections to bringing "women actors on the stage to personate female parts" are matched by his view that it is equally intolerable for "a Boy to put on a womans apparrell, person and behaviour to act a feminine part." Prynne's perverse sense of equality, that the "superabundant

sinfulness of the one, can neither justify the lawfulness, nor extenuate the wickedness of the other" (1633, 215) betrays a deep insecurity about the power of acting to undo gender difference. Although early modern English spectators read gender in terms of the distinctive qualities of each sex, stage representations interrogated the meanings attributed to such difference. On the public stage the practice of boy actors playing women was a convention accepted by audiences that could be manipulated by dramatists or performers to produce comic and disturbing effects. Moments in which the art of acting was put under the spotlight, especially through the mouths or bodies of transvestite performers, unsettled the idea of fixed, perfect gender difference. Performances by boys' companies and the presence of female actors in other theatrical arenas, such as Court or household entertainments, inevitably complicated the issue. In such an environment male representations of gendered subjects often seem the products of both fear and desire, haunted by deep insecurity about masculine selfhood. Hamlet's confident declaration "what a piece of work is a man" (2.2.305) implies the effort required to secure gendered identity: the work to construct oneself as different on a stage in which sexual distinctions can only be imagined. For women fighting against myriad masks and representations, the problem was, perhaps, still greater since they were denied access to most formal theatrical modes of self-representation. However, even in all-male productions, theater retained its power of exposure. Onstage, the perfect constitution of gender, as either man or woman, was relegated to the realm of fantasy, and the performative nature of sexual difference was foregrounded. Recreating oneself as a credible man or woman was the professional actor's work; nonprofessional actors like Henrietta-Maria could play at expanding the parameters of acceptable activity for a woman. For the spectators of early modern England, performing difference was the stuff of everyday living. Visiting the theater frequently reminded one of that invisible work.

NOTES

- 1 Citations of *Iphigenia* are from Lumley ([1554] 1998). On the play in performance see Hodgson-Wright (1998); for a discussion of the Rose Company Theater's production see Findlay (2015). On performance at Nonsuch see Wynne-Davies (2007), 63–88; Findlay (2006), 74–9.
- 2 The pageants were by Bernard Garter, Thomas Churchyard, and Henry Goldingham.
- 3 King Edward's Boys have also produced Lyly's *Mother Bombie* (2010); Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (2013), Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (2008) and *Antonio's Revenge* (2011), Middleton's *A Mad World My Masters* (2009) and Dekker and Webster's *Westward Ho* (2012), Ford's *The Lady's Trial* (2015), *The Woman Hater* (2016), and *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (2017). See <http://www.edwardsboys.org/past-productions> for filmed versions and extracts.
- 4 Francis Kynaston, from Shropshire, was probably related to Edward Kynaston, the transvestite actor famous for performing women's roles in the Restoration theater.

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Race and Early Modern Drama

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We can discern both differences and similarities between modern and early modern racial discourses. Both discourses prove fluid, protean, and unstable, and they deploy a range of categories – such as religion, gender, and rank – to determine criteria and manage power relations. Then and now, phenotypical and cultural differences comprise racial logic. But since ideas about physiology, reproduction, and the transmission of traits have changed over time, the construction of early modern racial boundaries based in natural philosophy may be unfamiliar to modern readers. Moreover, colonialism and the Atlantic slave trade existed only in incipient forms in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, although they emerged as dominant influences on later racial ideologies.

This chapter will present the primary concepts that early modern writers deployed to classify and differentiate communities or groups of people, and it will attempt to discern where racial discourses appear in early modern British drama chiefly to consider how the plays contribute to, and complicate, debates about racial thinking and racial constructs. Powerful factors such as religion, sin, conversion, physiology, color, blood lines, definitions of barbarism and civility, degeneracy, travel, migration, conquest, colonialism, slavery, humoralism, geohumoralism, environment, education, diet, habit, marriage, reproduction, cosmetics, and notions of beauty are all represented – sometimes collaboratively and sometimes in contradictory ways – in the delineation of hierarchies and divisions among humans.¹

In the late 1960s, when critics began to address the question of race in early modern drama, most scholars took a typological approach, tracing how blackness in the medieval and Renaissance period was associated with the devil and sin (Jones 1965; Jordan 1968; Hunter 1978; Vaughan and Vaughan 1997). Harkening back to the vice figures of medieval morality plays, who were portrayed as black as the devil, George Peele in *The Battle of Alcazar* (1597) equates blackness with villainy and violence and suggests that Moors are human devils:

Blacke in his looke, and bloudie in his deeds;
And in his shirt staind with a cloud of gore,
Presents himselfe, with naked sword in hand,

Accompanied, as now you may behold,
 With devils coted in the shapes of men.
 (Prologue.16–20)

In Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* (c.1600) the Moor is identified as the "black Prince of Divels" whose "damnation [is] dy'd upon his flesh" (1.1.90, 5.2.20). When other characters impersonate the Moor, they are instructed to paint their "faces with the oil of hell" (5.2.167–72). The correspondence made in the drama between dark skin and sinfulness appears to echo the Curse of Ham, a narrative circulating in the period, which identified blackness as God's punishment of Ham's offspring, thus signifying their inherent wickedness and hereditary servitude. Genesis, in fact, makes no mention of blackness, but early modern writers such as George Best drew on the biblical narrative to argue that when Noah's "wicked son Cham" disobeys his father's injunction to "abstain from carnal copulation with their wives," he is cursed with a son "whose name was Chus, who not only itself, but all his posterity after him, should be so black and loathsome, that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the world."²

Although Peele identifies Muly Mahamet as an "accursed Moor" (1.1.54), neither playwright explicitly cites the Curse of Ham as an explanation of blackness. Indeed, both Peele and Dekker represent Moorish villainy in more complicated terms than a typological approach allows. In her reading of *The Battle of Alcazar*, for example, Emily Bartels points out that Muly Mahamet not only shares a bloodline with the triumphant Moor, Abdelmelec, but the play also values Abdelmelec's global citizenry over the isolationism of both Muly and the Englishman Stukley (2008, 31–4). Intriguingly, Muly himself claims to be cursed, not by God but by a "fatall starre" or planet that determined his fortune at birth:

My starres, my dam, my planets and my nurse,
 The fire, the aire, the water, and the earth,
 All causes that have thus conspired in one,
 To nourish and preserve me to this shame,
 Thou that were at my birth predominate,
 Thou fatall starre, what planet ere thou be,
 Spit out thy poison bad, and all the ill
 That fortune, fate or heaven may bode a man.
 (5.1.1393–400)

Although he does not name the predominant star, it seems likely that he refers to Saturn, the planet typically blamed for producing melancholy – the humor usually associated with black complexions, poison, and malice. It was commonplace in the period to identify Moors and Africans as naturally melancholic, an attribution based not only on skin color but also on the environmental effects of southern climates. Many writers argued that external heat "burneth and wasteth humours," making the inhabitants' bodies cool, dry, and melancholic (Floyd-Wilson 2003, 1–2, 67–8).

Aaron, the villainous, "incarnate devil" in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* echoes Muly when he describes himself to the Gothic Queen Tamora:

Madam, though Venus govern your desires,
 Saturn is dominator over mine.
 What signifies my deadly-standing eye,

My silence, and my cloudy melancholy,
 My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls
 Even as an adder when she doth unroll
 To do some fatal execution?
 No, madam, these are no venereal signs:
 Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,
 Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.
 (2.3.30–9)

Aaron argues that both his appearance and his villainy can be ascribed to a melancholic complexion and the influence of Saturn. Intriguingly, he acknowledges that Moors are read typologically, noting that his “deadly-standing eye,” his “silence” and his “fleece of woolly hair” necessarily signify vengeance and death. Surprisingly, for modern readers, he insists that these are not “venereal signs.” His denial of a link between blackness and licentiousness implicitly concedes that Moors have been classified by some as excessively passionate, a stereotype that gains traction in English representations of Africans throughout the seventeenth century, notoriously exemplified in Iago’s malign characterization of Othello as a “lascivious Moor” (1.1.127). However, on the basis of his humoral constitution, Aaron insists he possesses a cool, dry complexion. He argues, instead, that Venus governs the hot desires of the barbaric northerner Tamora. Aaron’s relationship with Tamora recalls the coupling of Eleazar the Moor and the Queen in *Lust’s Dominion, or the Lascivious Queen* (c.1600). Eleazar does not immediately respond to the queen’s sexual advances; indeed he complains that he feels “sick, heavie, and dull as lead” (1.1.38). He further protests that his efforts to cool the queen’s lust have compelled him to make

...an extraction to the quintessence
 Even of my soul: melted all my spirits,
 Ravish’d my youth, deflower’d my lovely cheeks,
 And dried this, this to an anatomy
 Only to feed [her] lust.
 (1.1.108–12)

Although characterized as sinful, incarnate devils by their opponents, Aaron and Eleazar ultimately function as scapegoats for the states that they infiltrate. Indeed, their final banishments stress not only their own wickedness but also the corrupt values of their conquerors – not unlike Barabas’ capacity to point up his enemies’ hypocrisy in Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* (c.1589).

For George Best, blackness signified the Hametic curse but its appearance as an inherited trait, communicated from parent to child, also casts doubt on its supposed climatic origins. Blackness begins, he argues, as a curse that has developed into a polluting “infection” that marks the “whole progenie”:

I my selfe have seene an Ethiopian as blacke as a cole brought into England, who taking a faire English woman to wife, begat a sonne in all respects as blacke as the father was, although England were his native countrey, and an English woman his mother: whereby it seemeth this blacknes proceedeth rather of some natural infection of that man, which was so strong, that neither the nature of the Clime, neither the good complexion of the mother concurring, could any thing alter, and therefore, wee cannot impute it to the nature of the Clime ... And the most probable cause to my

judgment is, that this blacknesse proceedeth of some naturall infection of the first inhabitants of that Countrey, and so all the whole progenie of them descended, are still polluted with the same blot of infection. ([1578] 2007, 108–10)

In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare's representation of the transmission of blackness points to a more variable discourse of reproduction than Best describes. When Aaron and Tamora beget a black-skinned child, Aaron reportedly allows for the possibility that nature could have given the child his mother's pale complexion:

'Peace, tawny slave, half me and half thy dam!
Did not thy hue bewray whose brat thou art,
Had nature lent thee but thy mother's look,
Villain, thou mightst have been an emperor:
But where the bull and cow are both milk-white,
They never do beget a coal-black calf.

(5.1.27–32)

As if to demonstrate the Moor's speculation about nature's capacity to privilege either darker or lighter skin in offspring, it is reported that Aaron's countryman Muliteus has also fathered a child in Rome with a woman as white as the Goths, and their newborn "child is like to her, fair" (4.2.153).

For writers such as Juan Huarte, the Spanish author of *The Examination of Men's Wits* (1594), the two-seed theory of conception sustained the conjecture that either a mother or a father's traits could prevail in procreation:

two seedes should concurre; which being mingled, the mightier should make the forming and the other serve for nourishment. And this is seen evidently so to be: for if a blackamore beget a white woman with child, and a white man a negro woman, of both these unions, will be borne a creature, partaking of either qualitie. (qtd. in Loomba and Burton 2007, 133–5)

Huarte's theories of transmission also challenge Best's contention that a climatic, or geohumoral, understanding of complexion is irreconcilable with a parents' transference of qualities to descendants outside of their "native country." For Huarte, the Egyptians now residing in Spain inherited qualities from their ancestors first instilled in them by Egypt's climate: "though 200 yeares have passed . . . sithens the first Aegyptians came out of Aegypt into Spaine, yet their posterite have not forlorne that their delicacie of wit and promptnesse, nor yet that rosted colour which their auncestors brought with them from Aegypt." Huarte identifies the Egyptians' ancient wisdom with their "rosted colour," an association that has its origins in the discourse on melancholy. He also suggests that when "the force of mans seed" receives "any well rooted qualitie," it can be inherited by subsequent generations, in the same way that "the moors communicate the colour of their elders, by means of their seed, though they be out of Aethiopia."

Whether understood as a "rooted qualitie" or a "blot of infection," blackness is often characterized in the drama as fixed or resistant to change. When disparaging the Goth boys, Chiron and Demetrius, for their cowardice and stupidity, Aaron contends that the unalterable nature of blackness should be celebrated:

What, what, ye sanguine, shallow-hearted boys,
Ye white-limed walls, ye alehouse painted signs,

Coal-black is better than another hue,
 In that it scorns to bear another hue;
 For all the water in the ocean
 Can never turn the swan's black legs to white,
 Although she lave them hourly in the flood.

(*Titus Andronicus*, 4.2.96–102)

Pale complexions, Aaron notes, are prone to blushing, thus revealing the subject's shame and fear. And they are associated with painting or cosmetics, for their whiteness easily "bear[s] another hue." Proud that water cannot wash a "swan's black legs to white," Aaron invokes and appropriates the ancient and popular proverb, "You wash an Aethiopian; why the labor in vain?" – a saying that articulated for early moderns some of their anxieties about religious conversion as well as racial otherness (Newman 1987).

Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) bases its narrative on the notion that blackness is inalterable to stage the European appraisal of whiteness as the standard of female beauty. Written in response to Queen Anne's request that she and her ladies wish to perform as "Blackamoors" in the court's first masque, *The Masque of Blackness* expresses concerns about gender, race, British politics, and empire, even as it aims to praise and advise King James I. The masque tells the story of twelve African nymphs who wish to change their skin from black to white when they hear that blackness is not deemed beautiful. When they learn in a vision that the sun that rules the blessed isle Britannia can transform them, they travel northward. Protesting their decision, their father Niger commends their blackness for its constancy: "Death herself (herself being pale and blue) / Can never alter their most faithful hue" (Jonson [1605] 1969; ll. 124–5). Indeed the faithfulness of their hue brings them closer to "divinity," since they "stand from passion or decay so free" (ll. 128–9). But it is the "brainsick" poets in more northern countries who have infected his daughters with the fiction that the white, "painted beauties [of] other empires" (ll. 131–3) have bested them in "great beauty's war" (l. 127).

When Niger's daughters learn that Britannia is ruled by a Sun whose "sciential," or wise, power can blanch an Ethiop (ll. 225–6), they make their way northward to seek a transformation from black to white. It is clear to see that the "glorification of whiteness" is connected to the growth of empire in Jonson's vision (Hall 1995, 133). As Kim F. Hall has demonstrated, "English discourses of blackness" drew regularly on the language of "painting and cosmetics" to construct the value of female fair complexions (1995, 87). Blackness was also represented as a "natural" complexion in the critiques of white women's use of cosmetics. It was also commonplace for female Moors in the drama to cite an incapacity to blush as equivalent to an inability to manifest or even feel shame.³ In the play *The Knight of Malta* (1647) Abdella (or Zanthia) the Moor asserts that her "black Cheeke [cannot] put on a feigned blush, / To make [her] seeme more modest than [she is]," for the "ground-worke" of her skin "will not beare adulterate red, / Nor artificall white" (Fletcher [1647] 1966; 1.1.173–6). Jonson may have seen correspondences in Queen Anne's desire to play an Ethiop, the African nymphs' wish to change their complexion, and the northern beauties' inclination to paint, for they all share what some early modern writers would characterize as an effeminate "apish desire" for change. John Bulwer contends in *Anthropometamorphosis* (1650) that the Moors' ancestors painted their lighter complexion "to a new and more fashionable hue," and the alteration was "continued" by the climate, thus transforming an artificial affectation into a "natural impression" (Floyd-Wilson 2003, 83–5; Loomba and Burton 2007, 245–7).

When Jonson composed *The Masque of Blackness*, on the heels of James I's accession, the proposed union between Scotland and England held everyone's attention. Many English citizens objected to the union with the argument that the Scottish were – as their northern neighbors – exceedingly barbaric and unruly (an objection that obscured their own reputation on the Continent as barbaric northerners).⁴ Jonson celebrates the possibility of a union by drawing on the King's rhetoric in his depiction of Britannia as having “recovered” her name (l. 212). Jonson's use of the word “blanch” (l. 225), a Scottish legal term, cites the King's claim that he had the capacity to transform a subject's debt to the Crown to a nominal fee or a ceremonial gift. Moreover, the story Jonson tells of African people migrating northward resonates with the Scottish claim that they were not descendants of the barbaric Scythians but the wise and civilized Egyptians. Britannia's sun then, has the power not only to blanch an Ethiop but also to “salve the rude defects of every creature” (l. 227), including the Scots and the English (Floyd-Wilson 2003, 116–17).

Implicit in Jonson's narrative of the Ethiopian Moors moving northward is the concept of *translatio studii*, a topos that traces the westward movement of learning from ancient civilizations. The global mapping of barbarism and civility, initially derived from the Greek historian Herodotus, also informs the British nation's view of ethnicity and race. Defining “barbarians” as those who do not speak Greek, Herodotus draws on a rhetoric of inversion to contrast northern Scythian customs with southern Egyptian culture (Gillies 1994, 8–9). Similarly from a Greek perspective, Aristotle and Hippocrates argued that cold climates produced barbaric populations; southern climates, in turn, were associated with antiquity and the decline of civilizations (Floyd-Wilson 2003; Smith 2009). The mapping of different kinds of barbarism seems plain in *Titus Andronicus* with its portrait of northern Goths, southern Moors, and the pollution of the once-glorious Roman body politic (Gillies 1994, 102–12). While a Trojan ancestry had previously secured Britain's position in the *translatio studii et imperii* topos, attacks on the mythic narrative's authenticity in the sixteenth century compelled British writers such as William Camden in *Britannia* (1586) to cite Caesar's description of the Britons as a barbaric race, indistinguishable from the Picts and the Scythians. This genealogical crisis led some early modern writers, such as Thomas Smith in *De Republica Anglorum* (1583), to argue that Roman colonization initiated Britain's civilizing process, a narrative often used to justify British efforts to colonize the Irish. Spenser would echo this sentiment in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596). Other writers, such as Stephen Gosson in *Schoole of Abuse* (1579), or William Camden in *Remains Concerning Britain* (1605), celebrated the hearty, heroic virtues supposedly inherited from their barbaric progenitors.

Christopher Marlowe in *Tamburlaine I and II* (c.1587–8) represents a northern warrior whose inherent strengths may have appealed to a British audience invested in reimagining the admirable qualities of “undegenerate” ancestors. Not only does Marlowe depict Tamburlaine's martial flesh as peculiarly northern and “Scythian,” but other writers in the period also associated Tamburlaine's scourging conquests with the reform or eradication of degeneracy. In *Of the Knowledge and Conduct of Warres* (1578), Thomas Proctor advises that the English amend their current effeminate idleness by imitating the military practices and discipline of soldiers like Tamburlaine (Floyd-Wilson 2003, 130). Tamburlaine's anxiety, however, is that civilizing forces – or rather, decadent courtly behaviors – have made it impossible for him to transmit his conquering spirit to his sons:

But yet methinks their looks are amorous,
Not martial as the sons of Tamburlaine:

Water and air, being symboliz'd in one,
 Argue their want of courage and of wit;
 Their hair as white as milk, and soft as down,
 (Which should be like the quills of porcupines,
 As black as jet, and hard as iron or steel,)
 Bewrays they are too dainty for the wars;
 Their fingers made to quaver on a lute,
 Their arms to hang about a lady's neck,
 Their legs to dance and caper in the air,
 Would make me think them bastards, not my sons,
 But that I know they issu'd from thy womb,
 That never look'd on man but Tamburlaine.
 (Marlowe [1587–8] 1997, *Part II*, 1.4.21–34)

As this passage indicates, the transmission of traits from father to son may not only be disrupted by the mother's role but also by the culture's power to shape natural or biological qualities. In an analogous vein, Stephen Gosson in *The School of Abuse* (1579) laments England's loss of "old discipline" when the men "went naked, and were good soldiours, they fed upon rootes and barks of trees." In valor, the men measure up to the Scythians, but they have since been weakened by "banqueting, playing, pipyng, and dauncing" (qtd. in Floyd-Wilson 2003, 97; see also Feerick 2010).

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* tells a similar story about the loss of martial prowess but makes plainer the proto-racialist implications of degeneracy narratives. Much like Tamburlaine and Gosson's old English, Antony bore the harsh conditions of the field "with patience more / Than savages could suffer," able to eat "strange flesh" and drink the "gilded puddle / Which beasts would cough at" (1.4.60–3). However, once caught in the luxury and excess of Cleopatra's Egyptian Court, Antony's heart becomes merely "the bellows and the fan / To cool a gipsy's lust" (1.1.9–10). Much like Niger's daughters in *The Masque of Blackness*, whose "firm hues" are "Signs of [the sun's] fervent'st love" (ll. 117–18), Cleopatra claims her "black" complexion is the effect of "Phoebus' amorous pinches" (1.5.28). Ania Loomba has argued that "Antony's fatal attraction to Cleopatra speaks to contemporary English fears about the erosion of racial identity and masculinity" (2002, 133). But their love story also recounts the south's imperial decline, a degeneration narrative that puts England in a favorable position in relation to the *translatio studii et imperii* topos. Identifying Cleopatra with a gipsy links her to the cultural phenomenon of false English gypsies – tricksters and conjurers who supposedly blackened their faces to counterfeit an Egyptian descent (Loomba 2002, 127–8; Iyengar 2005, 173–99). Shakespeare both glorifies and diminishes Cleopatra's capacity as a performer in her metatheatrical fear that "Some squeaking Cleopatra [will] boy my greatness / I' the posture of a whore" (5.2.216–17; Floyd-Wilson 1999).

Othello also worries about future representations of his character in his final scene, imploring his listeners to remember him as "one not easily jealous, but being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreme" (5.2.354–5). A popular strain in the discourse on geohumoralism would support Othello's claim, as expressed by Desdemona when she states, "I think the sun where he was born / Drew all such [jealous] humours from him" (3.4.28–9; Floyd-Wilson 2003, 139–42). If Othello is naturally cool and dry, then he may, in fact, be speaking the truth in his final bid for sympathy. Critics of the play have long struggled with the question of whether Othello's disintegration signals the barbarian's loss of a Christian or civilized mask, or the emergent double consciousness of a colonized subject. In a slightly different register, Dennis Britton argues that Iago "seeks to

undo the romance telos and manipulate the infidel-conversion motif in order to restore what is presumably Othello's prior Muslim identity" (2014, 33). We may also need to situate *Othello* in a Spanish context, as Eric Griffin (2009) and Emily Weissbound (2013) have argued, which could link Othello's past to the Iberian slave trade and *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood). The early modern belief in the physiological effect of words – their capacity to infect, for example – also raises the possibility that Iago corrupts Othello with the same suspicious poison that gnaws at his own innards (what Ben Jonson terms the "black poison of suspect" ([1598] 2000; 1.4.220). As I have argued, the play "stands at a crossroads in the history of ethnological ideas," for the power of Iago's hostile stereotyping is able to dislodge the "geohumoral homologies that ... established blackness as a sign of wisdom and constancy" (Floyd-Wilson 2003, 58). As spectators and auditors, we are not only susceptible to Iago's hateful rhetoric but also witness to Othello's monstrous transformation, a spectacle that succeeds, perhaps, in erasing our memory of his naturally dispassionate temperament or his initial resistance to following the "changes of the moon with fresh suspicions."

Dennis Britton, Ania Loomba (2002), and Julia Reinhard Lupton (2005), among others, have argued that racial criteria in the period were most often shaped by religious differences. Britton contends, moreover, that "religious differences were not merely a matter of belief but also of genealogy, so much so that true and false belief, salvation, and damnation were often seen as racial characteristics passed from parents to children" (2014, 7). Loomba has noted that religious conversions produced racial anxiety: "If the faithful constitute a permeable and changeable body, then the purity of both the original body and those who are allowed to join it is always suspect" (2000, 209). Jane Hwang Degenhardt suggests that representations of Islamic conversion highlight the period's racial logic. Circumcision, in particular, was "a physical sign of the irreversibility of conversion as well as the convert's relegation to a proto-racial category that distinguished Muslims and Jews from Christians" (2010, 131; also Shapiro 1996). Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612) presents the conversion of pirate John Ward to Islam as submission to the sensual appeal of Voada, a Muslim woman. Ward's tragedy ends with repentance when he speaks for the "force of Christendom" and rages against the Turks and Islam (16.309; Fuchs 2000, 62–5). Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (1623) appears to function as an answer to Daborne's play, for the Christian man not only resists Islam but also transforms the "Muslim temptress into a Christian wife" (Burton 2005, 135, 153; Vitkus 2000; 2003). But as Degenhardt observes, the protection of the Christian woman's virtue, Donusa, depends on a "magical relic, revealing her greater vulnerability to racial reinscription" (2010, 29).

In the field of early modern drama, *The Merchant of Venice* may be the most complicated representation of the racial logic of religious differences. Jessica's conversion and marriage to Lorenzo has suggested to some critics that women (particularly if their complexions could be construed as "fair") were more easily transferable (Metzger 1998). She herself claims that "though I am daughter to [Shylock's] blood, / I am not to his manners" (2.3.17–18). But does her conversion have any basis in biology? Is her blood different from her father's, and if so, why? Salerio insists that there "Is more difference between [Shylock's] flesh and hers than between jet and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish" (3.1.33–5). Janet Adelman has argued that Jessica's Jewishness would have been transmitted from her mother's womb (2008, 96). Moreover, the continued Jewish threat of Jessica's womb, she contends, would have incurred fears of miscegenation among the Christians. Taking a different approach, M. Lindsay Kaplan cites the one-seed theory of impregnation (in which men provide the seed and

women provide only the impressionable matter) to suggest that the mother's racial makeup proved irrelevant to the racial identity of the children (2007, 15–16).

Certainly Jessica proves more malleable or open to Christian influence than her father, who is characterized as hard and stubborn. As the Duke argues, even the “brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint, / From stubborn Turks and Tartars never trained / To offices of tender courtesy” would feel “commiseration” for Antonio's plight (4.1.29–32). Indeed, Shylock is portrayed as endeavoring to cultivate this stony hardness – not only in his religious beliefs and his insistence on revenge but also in his physiology. While he claims to be fed by the same food and cooled by the same winds as the Christians, he actually lives much of his life adhering to a set of prescriptive rules that would ensure that his body is subject to very different experiences. But in Shylock's account, his hatred for Antonio is so deeply ingrained and intrinsic that it resists not only external influences, be they cultural or religious, but also logic. In the following speech, he attributes his desire for revenge to his “humour.” However, what he designates as a humor is not, in fact, humoral. He describes, instead, a more mysterious kind of antipathy that early modern writers regularly deemed to be occult, idiosyncratic, and beyond the reach of fashioning or tempering:

You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
 A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
 Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that:
 But, say, it is my humour: is it answer'd?
 What if my house be troubled with a rat
 And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats
 To have it baned? What, are you answer'd yet?
 Some men there are love not a gaping pig;
 Some, that are mad if they behold a cat;
 And others, when the bagpipe sings i' the nose,
 Cannot contain their urine: for affection,
 Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
 Of what it likes or loathes. Now, for your answer:
 As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
 Why he cannot abide a gaping pig;
 Why he, a harmless necessary cat;
 Why he, a woollen bagpipe; but of force
 Must yield to such inevitable shame
 As to offend, himself being offended;
 So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
 More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing
 I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
 A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd?

(4.1.39–61)

Shylock's odd examples of men who cannot hold their urine when they hear a bagpipe, or who grow mad in the presence of a cat, recalls the strange and oft-repeated catalogs of sympathies and antipathies that coursed through the natural world, which were frequently described in books of magic. Giambattista della Porta, for example, remarks on the mysterious nature of antipathies in a similar vein: “Some cannot [stand] to look upon a Cat, a Mouse, and such like, but presently they swoon.’ These peculiar aversions were understood as inexplicable and illogical – occult in

their causation – but not necessarily humoral” ([1658] 1957, 19; Floyd-Wilson 2013, 10–11). Nor were they thought to be transmissible traits. One’s inclination to swoon in the presence of a cat is not a quality passed on from parents to their offspring. It is Shylock’s hatred for “gaping pig,” however, that challenges his contention that his animosity is immutable and inherent, unaffected by habits or practices. The gaping pig, which we can assume is roasted and ready for consumption by the Christian pork-lovers, refers again to Shylock’s dietary restrictions. He cannot abide a gaping pig because of his tribe’s adherence to Levitical laws. From a Christian point of view, this hatred may be physical, but it is also cultivated and nourished by Shylock’s customs and traditions (Earle 2014).

In a similar vein, the question of whether Caliban is “irreducibly different” or can be assimilated into European culture has shaped the discussion of racial discourse in *The Tempest*. On the one hand, Prospero insists that Caliban is “a born devil, on whose name / Nurture can never stick”; on the other hand, Caliban “does learn his master’s language” (4.1.88–9; Loomba 2002, 163). But on this point, Ian Smith maintains that Caliban “understands the work of language indoctrination ... as insidious and destructive, and he resists its inscriptions of imperial and colonial power” (2009, 158). Caliban’s promise to “be wise hereafter, and seek for grace” suggests, perhaps, that Prospero’s indoctrination succeeds (5.1.288–9). And yet, an assessment of Antonio’s seemingly evil and “unnatural” inclinations should further complicate the question of nurture versus nature. Although European and nominally Christian, he eagerly betrays his brother and Alonso and then proves stubbornly unrepentant in response to Prospero’s forgiveness. Shakespeare’s allusions to the Bermudas, Montaigne’s essay “Of Cannibals,” and William Strachey’s account of a shipwreck off the coast of Bermuda set the stage for reading *The Tempest* in a New World context, making it a foundational text in the postcolonial turn in early modern studies. In recent years, critics have reconsidered its Mediterranean setting (Hulme and Sherman 2000). This reorientation reminds us that the romance’s colonial ideology is connected not only to the New World but also to anxieties about Islamic power and Irish rebellions (Fuchs 1997).

By recalling Sycorax’s journey from Algiers and Claribel’s arrival in Tunis, critics are increasingly mapping *The Tempest* as a global play that testifies to “England’s emerging role in the complex networks of travel and traffic in diverse regions and nations” (Singh 2009, 5). In looking toward future work on racialism in the early modern period, scholars are tracing “alternative modes of cross-cultural relationality that have been suppressed by subsequent histories of empire and discourses of difference.” Critics such as Jyotsna G. Singh and Jonathan Gil Harris look to the “subaltern possibilities” that emerge, for example, from the “transnational web of trade routes called the Silk Road, whose traffic helped foster the cosmopolitanism as much as the wealth of the medieval and early modern Islamic world” (Harris 2012, 15). Not only are we gaining a more complicated understanding of the global networks that generated “unexpected affinities” between and among populations marked by religious, cultural, and physiological differences but scholars are also examining how local “aliens” – such as the Dutch or the French – shaped the English representations of race on the early modern stage (ex. Williams 2004; Kermode 2009; Oldenburg 2014; Rubright 2014). As we gain further knowledge about what constituted the local and the exotic, the diverse experiences of trade, travel, and religion, as well as the complexities of consumption and exchange, our understanding of race and ethnicity on the early modern stage will, most likely, become even more nuanced and historically specific.

NOTES

- 1 For a helpful survey of the variety of discourses that inform early modern racial constructions, see Loomba (1989) and Loomba and Burton (2007).
- 2 See Best ([1578] 2007), 108–10. On the curse of Ham, see Braude (1997); Goldenberg (2003); Whitford (2009).
- 3 For a thorough discussion of skin color in the period, see Iyengar (2005). On cosmetics and race, see Poitevin (2011).
- 4 For discussions of northern barbarism, see Helgerson (1992); Mikalachki (1998); Shuger (1997); Floyd-Wilson (2003; 2006).

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Staging Disability in Renaissance Drama

David Houston Wood

To call disability an identity is to recognize that it is not a biological or natural property but an elastic social category both subject to social control and capable of effecting social change. ... Able-bodiedness is a temporary identity at best, while being human guarantees that all other identities will eventually come into contact with some form of disability identity.

Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (2008, 4–5)

As what has ungraciously been called “the congenitally archdefective in all literature,” William Shakespeare’s Richard III frequently stands as the representative example of English Renaissance drama’s engagement with disability (Mitchell and Snyder 2000, 112–13). By far the most staged (and thus in some sense the most popular) of all Shakespeare’s plays, *Richard III* metaphorically links Richard’s physical deformities with murderous evil by means of what disability scholars call the *moral model* of disability. Shakespeare himself, of course, seems to have been sufficiently interested in exploring the connection between deformity and evil to have traced Richard’s character across fully three of his early history plays: *2 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*, and *Richard III* (Pearlman 1992). Within these works, Richard famously suggests he is “not shaped for sportive tricks, / ... rudely stamped, ... / ... curtailed of this fair proportion, / Cheated of feature by dissembling nature, / Deformed, unfinished, sent before [his] time / Into this breathing world, scarce half made up, / And that so lamely and unfashionable / That dogs bark at [him] as [he] halt[s] by them” (*Richard III*, 1.1.14–23).¹

His deformities, as he enumerates them, center on his “misshapen” form, including an arm “like a blasted sapling withered up” (3.4.68), a back like a “mountain,” and legs “shape[d]” of an “unequal size,” so that he is “disproportion[ed] ... Like to a chaos” (*3 Henry VI*, 3.2.156–60). Beyond such self-assessment, however, others’ accounts of Richard single him out as the “diffused infection of a man” (*Richard III*, 1.2.78), as an “elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog” (1.3.227), one whose character was “sealed in [his] nativity” as the “slave of nature and the son of hell; / [the] slander of [his] heavy mother’s womb, / [and the] loathed issue of [his] father’s loins” [1.3.228–31].

Indeed, as Shakespeare frames it, the social world which so scathingly stigmatizes Richard is relentless, accounting him a “bottled spider, that foul bunch-backed toad” (4.4.81), a “cockatrice,” a “cacodemon” (4.1.54, 1.3.143), a “dog,” a “hog,” and, as his own mother addresses him, “Thou toad, thou toad” (4.4.145). While it is tempting to rely upon this characterization of Richard as singularly if cruelly representative of Renaissance drama’s engagement with disability, disability depictions in the drama of the period are both far more common than a focus on Richard might lead us to believe, and their significations far more complex. In fact, if we define disability as any frequently stigmatized sensory, somatic, or cognitive impairment which is either congenital (deriving from birth), acquired (secured during one’s lifetime), or periodic (from which one phases in and out), then it actually becomes rather difficult to pinpoint examples of Renaissance drama that fail to stage disabilities of some sort.

In fact, representations of disability, by any measure, were ubiquitous on the English Renaissance stage. Even setting aside Shakespearean drama (from the blinded Gloucester in *King Lear*, to the maimed Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*; from the “deformed” Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* to the senescent Adam in *As You Like It*), examples of sensory, somatic, and cognitive impairment pervade the drama of the period. Some of these plays employ the stigma associated with disability toward generically tragic or comedic ends: Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s *The Changeling* (1622), for example, features the sinister DeFlores, whose evil seems generated by what he and other characters identify as the ugliness of his “bad face”; in contrast, the anonymous “pleasant commodie” *Looke About You* (1600) presents a stutterer named Redcap and a series of nobles who adopt his distinctive attire and mock his stutter in order to negotiate the fracturing of sympathies at Henry II’s Court.² Other plays stress the agency of disabled characters: the anonymous *A Larum for London* (1602), for example, set during the historical siege of Antwerp during the Eighty Years’ War, presents a lieutenant named Stump as an amputee who lost a leg in battle, and who now attempts to defend the very city that has callously disrespected him due to his disability; the anonymous *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (c.1607) similarly portrays a protagonist named The Cripple, successfully employed in London’s textile industry, who serves as the core of his community. Several plays involve disability in the context of the law: inviting investigation into ethics and euthanasia, Philip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, and William Rowley’s *The Old Law* (1656; perf. 1614–18) features legislation demanding the death of every man who reaches eighty years of age and every woman who reaches sixty; John Lyly’s *Mother Bombie* (1594; perf. c.1590) portrays two adult children with cognitive disabilities, identified as “fools” and “idiots,” whose fathers seek to marry them to each other in an effort to take power over their wealth. As in Lyly’s work, many plays explore disability in the context of marriage: Francis Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Little French Lawyer* (c.1620) portrays a young woman whose decision to marry a disabled veteran who has lost both an arm and a leg in battle outrages her former, able-bodied suitor; Massinger and Fletcher’s *A Very Woman* (1655; licensed 1634) presents an habituated alcoholic’s domination of her cuckold husband, who ultimately wreaks upon her a stinging revenge; Fletcher’s *The Pilgrim* (c.1621) features a cross-dressing heroine who feigns madness in order to avoid an unwanted marriage, which leads her to interact with the denizens of an actual madhouse; and the anonymous *Fair Em* (1631; perf. c.1590) presents a title character whose efforts to repel her unwanted suitors leads her to feign both blindness and deafness in a performance so cogent it ultimately deters the suitor she prefers.

This overview of these largely noncanonical examples of Renaissance drama demonstrates how broadening our sphere of reference beyond Shakespeare's *Richard III* reveals a vibrant and varied array of disability representations staged during the period. On the one hand, part of the work of early modern disability studies lies in recovering texts such as these which have failed to achieve entrance to the canon or which have been systematically excluded from it (Bly 2012). But much of the work in the field, on the other hand, involves engaging disability representations on their own terms: as reflective of the cultures in which they were produced and made meaning, and as interpretable through the insights that current disability theories can help us to reveal. Engaging Renaissance drama in these ways can prompt any number of salient questions: What sorts of medical, theological, legal, and aesthetic traditions informed early modern English ideas about disability? In what ways did early modern dramatists take these received opinions and make them new on the Renaissance stage? How does our ability to examine the literary record with reading strategies developed from contemporary disability theory transform such plays, and what are the methodological challenges and ethical responsibilities we face in doing so? What were the unique significations of congenital impairments among the early modern English in contrast with the meanings associated with acquired or periodic disabilities? Finally, how does the immediacy of staged drama – in which “character” is always a personation, always an embodied performance of some sort – contrast with depictions of disability situated within nonperformed literary texts, such as prose narrative and lyric poetry?

In exploring responses to questions such as these, this chapter examines disability as configured in English Renaissance drama in two parts: the first, “Theorizing Disability,” works from a range of early modern texts and current disability scholarship to investigate how disability served as an operational category of difference in early modern England. The second, “Disability and Theater,” explores the various literary-aesthetic effects that the staging of disability representations imparted to English Renaissance drama. In the end, I illustrate that engaging Renaissance drama through interpretive strategies developed from disability studies expands current concepts of embodied early modern selfhood even as it provides new ways of accessing difference in the period – both in newly recovered plays and in those familiar works we become fortunate enough to read entirely anew.

Theorizing Disability

In 1998, disability activist, theorist, and scholar Simi Linton issued a call to arms for the disability movement in a polemic which, in part, boldly defined disability studies against that which she argued it is not. Entitled *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*, this work refused disability as the object for scrutiny solely by the medical and its applied fields, such as special education, social services, and rehabilitation. Linton claimed it, rather, as the province of the arts and humanities. She observes that

The study of literature, linguistics, philosophy, art, aesthetics and literary criticism, and all the areas of the arts, dances around disability but rarely lights on it. Disability imagery abounds in the materials considered and produced in these fields, and yet because it is not analyzed, it remains as background, seemingly of little consequence. Disability, as perspective, has rarely been employed to flush out the hidden themes, images, metaphors, and problematic elements of the fields' guiding philosophies. As I look broadly across the humanities and the arts, I see an array of problems that affect not only what we as a society know about disability, but how we act with respect to disability. (1998, 110)

It is a powerful confirmation of Linton's appeal that disability studies in the ensuing years has been employed by a range of professionals beyond the domains of medicine and the applied fields: domains which, via the *medical model* of disability, are often criticized for pathologizing human variation, and thus isolating and depoliticizing individual medical experience (Mitchell and Snyder 1997; Garland-Thompson 1997). It is fair to say, in fact, as Tobin Siebers confirms in the epigraph, that disability studies has come far toward establishing disability as a defining social category on par with class, race and ethnicity, and gender and sexuality. In doing so, as Allison Hobgood has suggested, disability scholarship "has encouraged an understanding of how mental and physical variation are continually interpreted via various material, discursive, and aesthetic practices," even as it fosters a view of disability itself "as a social category more than an individual characteristic, a discursive construction instead of a bodily flaw, and a representational system rather than a physiological problem to be 'cured' by the medical community" (Hobgood and Wood 2013, 4–5). In its exploration of disability representations in the arts and humanities, disability scholarship has deepened its focus toward examination of disability representations as they span the historical record as well.

Within this context, it is important to acknowledge perhaps the broadest charge leveled against historicist practitioners of disability studies: that of anachronism. What value can there be, the question runs, in applying current views on disability within historical contexts surely much different than our own? In response, disability scholars maintain that to disregard the disability representations that we encounter in any historical period as anachronistic is to lull ourselves into the false luxury of failing to acknowledge such representations at all, and that we embrace such a position at our peril both as scholars and as citizens. Historical studies of disability (from the classical, medieval, Renaissance, and subsequent periods) uncover brand new disability histories that transform what we know about disability in the past, and, in doing so, help to shed light upon disability in our own cultural moment. In that sense, such scholarly pursuit helps us clarify the "there and then" of historical disability representations even as it clarifies those disability representations that manifest in the "here and now." As Siebers asserts: "The experience of contemporary minority people, once brought to light, resound back in history, like a reverse echo effect, to comment on the experiences of past minority peoples, while at the same time these past experiences contribute, one hopes, to an accumulation of knowledge about how oppression works" (2008, 16). To that end, recent period-specific work has pursued disability representations across a vast historical sweep, and historicist disability scholars have produced pioneering studies by shared attention to the microcosmic minutiae of disability representations within these various periods, and to the macrocosmic exploration of the disability models that have arisen in order to explore them.³ In discussing these representations and these models, it is helpful to position early modern English engagement with disability between its historical bookends: the medieval conceptualizing of difference centered upon marvels, monstrosity, and prodigiousness, on the one hand; and, on the other, the scientific categorizing of normalcy and deviance formulated during the Enlightenment.

Early modern England inherited a colorful legacy involving the meanings associated with human variation, both within its borders and involving the wider world. Medieval practitioners of what amounts to a sort of creative anthropology regarding such variation adapted their ideas from the work of classical theorists such as Herodotus and Pliny the Elder in treatises that peddled fabulous tales of creatures like the Anthropophagi, the Amazons, and others, who were said to pursue outlandish activities such as eschewing clothing and engaging in cannibalism.⁴ These tales of wonder were frequently echoed, often verbatim, by medieval scholars and encyclopedists

such as Isidore of Seville, Bartholomew Anglicanus, and especially John Mandeville, whose very name, as Margaret T. Hodgen has observed, ultimately became “synonymous with the legendary, the monstrous, the prodigious, and the mysterious” (1971, 69). Indeed, the marvelousness that typifies such descriptions of otherness in these works in turn helped to condition the *moral model* of disability, by which embodied difference became associated with the demonic.⁵ Such views reflect folk traditions that read in the term “monster” – whether positioned in a foreign context as ethnographically other, or within England as congenital deformities – the etymology of the word itself, which stems from the two Latin infinitive verbs *monere* (to warn, advise, or caution) and *monstrare* (to demonstrate, show, or note). To a marked degree, the *moral model* thus positions disability in the context of divine punishment or warning, but more broadly, too, as an inward deformity embodied, for example, by Shakespeare’s disenfranchised bastard sons in *Much Ado about Nothing*, *King John*, *King Lear*, and *Richard III*. In this context, we might consider as an adjunct of the *moral model* the early modern English laws that yoked disability with disenfranchisement, such that, as Ato Quayson observes, “persons of disability, located on the margins of society as they are, have historically taken on the coloration of whatever else is perceived to also lie on the social margins of society.” In fact, the English Poor Laws, as developed during this period, “ensured that the link between the sick poor and people with disabilities ... increasingly became the focus of legislation and municipal activity” (2007, 5–7). This connection has led to what medievalist Marian Lupo (2013) identifies as the *jurisdictional model* of disability, which addresses naming the individual who has the power to identify whether or not a disability has occurred at all.

Against this backdrop, however, and contemporaneous with the development of Renaissance drama, later medieval and early modern intellectual history reveals an important alteration in its comprehension of psycho-physiological difference. As historian Henri-Jacques Stiker observes, in the pre-Enlightenment context of the later sixteenth century, physicians such as Félix Plater and Ambroise Paré began to engage disability difference through a naturalistic categorizing impulse inspired by Aristotle; in doing so, they began to move beyond the *moral model*’s equation of embodied otherness with evil. Stiker confirms that during this period,

medical thought of a more scientific kind makes its appearance. Like Paré, it breaks with the idea of demonic visitation and curses in order to seat the origins of deformity via the causal categories established by Aristotle. ... However unrefined such a conception of causality may have been, it did show that thinkers were looking to a natural sequence of events and no longer to a moral one. (1999, 93)

Regardless of the mistaken nature of the categories themselves, that is, in which a child’s congenital deformity, for example, might be understood to be caused by the “imaginings of the mother” (Stiker 1999, 93) during conception or while giving birth, this shift toward a medical explanatory system based upon natural causation facilitated new ways of understanding such deformities. And while the corresponding development of germ-theory and heredity would develop cogency in subsequent centuries, theories pertaining to congenital deformity gained notable traction early on in the work of essayists such as Michel de Montaigne and Francis Bacon. Montaigne, for example, famously refuses to demonize those with such deformities, observing that such disabilities serve as the manifestations of “l’immensité de son ouvrage l’infinité des formes qu’il y a comprises [the immensity of God’s works composed of an infinity of forms].”⁶ It is, however, worth observing Montaigne and Bacon’s fascination with the connection between congenital impairment and the rechanneling of erotic energies (for example, into amorous skill

and enlarged genitalia), which suggests a manifestation of the ancient *compensatory model* whereby the impairment or loss of one sense or ability – such as eyesight, hearing, or lower leg abnormalities – becomes compensated in other ways, usually through metaphysical insight.⁷ Montaigne and Bacon’s rejection of the *moral model* of disability, nevertheless, is complicated by their promotion of disability as a cause of certain negative personality traits.⁸

In contrast to these traditional disability models, and the normalizing, “curative” logic which typifies our current *medical model*, the “New Disability Studies,” as Garland-Thomson (1997) names them, offer constructivist engagement with disability. The *social model* notably distinguishes psycho-physiological impairments from disability, defining disability as the product of environments that fail to address such impairments. While impairments of all sorts have always existed, of course, they may thus be construed as both transcultural and transhistoric; as with Stump in *A Larum for London*, and Champernell in *The Little French Lawyer*, a person with an amputated leg is a person with an amputated leg, regardless of where and when that person lives or, as a literary character, achieves textual representation (Nardizzi 2012). As what Siebers calls “an elastic social category” (2008, 4), disability, however, must be understood as socially constructed; centered as it is upon the variable meanings, traditions, and symbolism that a culture attaches to an impairment, disability is neither transcultural nor transhistorical. In this sense, as Lennard Davis shrewdly observes, “Impairment is the physical fact of lacking an arm or a leg. Disability is the social process that turns an impairment into a negative by creating barriers to access” (2002, 12). Over the last decade or so, however, Siebers, Tom Shakespeare, and David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have drawn careful attention to a weakness in this approach, specifically that the needs of certain bodies (those in severe pain, for example) are not addressable by accommodations to social environments. Various referred to as “complex embodiment” and the “new realism of the body,” the *cultural (or material) model*, accordingly, links impairments with lived corporeal experience. As Snyder and Mitchell observe, “the definition of disability must incorporate both the outer and inner reaches of culture and experience as a profound combination of biological and social forces” (2006, 7; see also Iyengar 2015, 1–19). This *cultural (or material) model*, accordingly, elides the *social model*’s rigid distinction between impairment and disability, and in doing so permits us to explore early modern disability’s intersectionality with historicized identity markers such as class, race and ethnicity, and gender and sexuality, in addition to linking early modern medical diagnoses with the sociocultural fields of the legal, the political, and the aesthetic.

A final disability model rife with scholarly potential involves what medievalist Edward Wheatley (2010) calls the *religious model*. This term points to the similar ways in which modern medical science and medieval religion engage disability: as a problem requiring a miraculous cure, whether by divine intervention (as with Christ healing the blind) or by modern medicine. Provocative in its thesis, the *religious model* is adaptable to the early modern period, though of course with a difference: the English Reformation (in all its fits and starts), with its groundwork in human inner depravity, faith over works, and the concept of the Elect, led to new ways of comprehending interactions between the disabled and the able-bodied, including a fundamental alteration in charitable practices.⁹ Given this early modern English theological upheaval and the burgeoning early modern medical sphere by way of the ancient but newly fashionable humoral theory, I wonder if linking the two domains within a disability context might point scholarship in a new, ethically driven direction.¹⁰ Indeed, anticipating the standard scholarly assertion of the “marked shift [that] came with the emergence of scientific medical discourse” in the “eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” certain pre-Enlightenment voices display categorizing impulses worth explicit consideration in a disability context (Quayson 2007, 9).

In addition to the work of Ambroise Paré ([1573] 1982), for example, and its turn away from disability's *moral model*, Elizabethan and Jacobean humoral theorists such as Timothy Bright, Robert Burton, and Thomas Wright – whose treatises we see reflected in the plays of numerous English Renaissance dramatists – worked within a well-developed humoral tradition that these theorists understood to be compelling science, even if we strain to see its logic today. Taking into account Bright and Burton's training as Protestant divines, moreover, allows us to consider a *Renaissance English religious model* that would examine as expressions of disability the formal humoral categories of the *natural* and the *unnatural*, the *kindly* and the *unkindly*, that govern the behavioral systems located within their medical texts. If Siebers is correct that “disability is not a pathological condition, only analyzable via individual psychology, but a social location complexly embodied” (2013, 283), then such a recognition can enable us to examine disability manifestations across the historical spectrum in their various period-specific manifestations; can encourage us to reenvision these disability manifestations within the literary record through the lens of scholars reflecting on disability in the here and now; and can compel us to explore disability as a corporate, and hence political, matter not merely limited to, nor easily dismissed as, an individualized medical concern. In this sense, it becomes essential to acknowledge that the ubiquitous enactment of disability difference on the English Renaissance stage prompted throngs of early modern theatergoers – and prompts us, their modern counterparts – to consider such disabilities in the context of the literary-aesthetic, dramatic effects that such performances reveal.

Disability and Theater

Recent work in early modern disability studies makes visible how literary strategies intent on establishing the norms of the physical and behavioral human form, and its affective responses, frequently enough find themselves establishing precisely the opposite: it is most often difference itself that comes to characterize the norm in the work of the dramatists in the period. This tendency to depict characterological difference, on the one hand, resonates in some presentist views of disability and in the growing scholarly attention to the role cultural constructions play in literary and artistic representations. On the other hand, this tendency to stress difference is also historical in nature, seen in the volatile, psychosomatic construct of the humoral self that scholarship by Paster (2004), Schoenfeldt (1999), Breitenberg (1996), and others have articulated in early modern medical texts. The particulars of humoral embodiment can lead us to interrogate in new ways the fragile status of human health in early modern England as reflected in its drama. While the ideal body within humoral theory, for example, contained a relative balance of the four principal humors (choler, sanguinity, melancholy, and phlegm), such humoral equipoise was only fleeting at best. Indeed, this unstable concept of normalcy within humoral theory indicates that early modern categories of stigmatized illness and disease – of disability – must be understood as far more porous than we today presume them to be. It is revealing to acknowledge that, in an explicit, technical sense, all early modern selves were to a greater or lesser degree fundamentally outside the norm. This fluctuating concept of normalcy suggests the sheer range of characterological possibility that Renaissance dramatists might draw upon to devise nonnormative disability displays for the Renaissance stage, thereby confirming Mitchell and Snyder's assertion that, at the narrative level, “Difference demands display. Display demands difference” (2000, 55).

We are aided in examining disability difference in Renaissance drama by utilizing the terminology that Garland-Thomson and Siebers have developed, respectively, to interrogate the

stigmatizing practices at work in twentieth and twenty-first century American culture. To do so, these scholars employ the normative baseline Erving Goffman established for the ideal American cultural type in his 1963 work *Stigma*, which he presents as one who is “Male . . . young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, [with a] Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, height, and a recent record in sports” (Goffman 1968, 128).¹¹ In her reaction to this idealized type, Garland-Thomson coins the construct of the “normate,” which she defines as “a deliberately clunky neologism that calls attention to itself by mocking the clinical.” It is also “the veiled subject position of the cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the [normate’s] normative boundaries” (1997, 8). Siebers similarly offers in reaction to this ideal a thesis he calls the “ideology of ability,” which he defines, simply enough, as the default position of the “preference for able-bodiedness” that insidiously stigmatizes those who are, or who are perceived to be, non-able-bodied (2008, 8). These reactions to Goffman’s normative model redirect attention to the nonnormative field of difference that ostensibly lies just beyond it. As Garland-Thomson explains: “Actual normates are scarce as hen’s teeth, whereas imagined normates preside over the public landscape” (2009, 45).

So too, we can surmise, does a similarly rare and illusory normative baseline function within Elizabethan and Jacobean cultures. Renaissance drama is filled, after all, with ostensible normates given to slippery humoral selfhood, and even married, twenty-something, Renaissance males were susceptible to an inner fluidity that might erupt into outward emotional and behavioral events: comically, as with the character La-Writ’s seething rage in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Little French Lawyer*; or tragically, as with Leontes’ murderous monstrosity in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*. Such stigmatized, psychosomatic eruptions within these humoral contexts should not necessarily be perceived as unusual, however. As Siebers suggests: “Disability creates theories of embodiment more complex than the ideology of ability allows, and these many embodiments are each crucial to the understanding of humanity and its variations, whether physical, mental, social, or historical” (2013, 279). Toward that end, recognizing period-specific forms of disability difference pays the rich reward at the narrative level of facilitating our engagement with such literary-aesthetic displays in two distinct ways: as what Mitchell and Snyder (2000) identify as the concept of narrative prosthesis; and as the destabilizing crisis of representation Quayson (2007) refers to as *aesthetic nervousness*.

Narrative prosthesis serves as the most valuable contribution disability studies has yet made within the field of narrative theory. In its fundamental sense, Mitchell and Snyder suggest, the term “is meant to indicate that disability has been used throughout history as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight” (2000, 49). They ground the theory in their reading of a Victorian children’s tale, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, which focuses upon the one toy soldier in a group of twenty-five who is missing one of his lower legs; based upon a child’s request to pursue this impaired soldier’s story over those of all the other able-bodied soldiers, Mitchell and Snyder develop a cogent theory pertaining to the role of disability difference in all narrative. They observe:

Whereas sociality might reject, isolate, institutionalize, reprimand, or obliterate this liability of a single leg, narrative embraces the opportunity that such a “lack” provides – in fact, wills it into existence – as the impetus that calls a story into being. Such a paradox underscores that ironic promise of disability to all narrative.

Mitchell and Snyder's compelling identification of disability as both the spur to narrative and the key to narrative resolution suggests such narratives achieve finality in conclusions that either leave behind such representations or punish them for their lack of social and narrative conformity.¹² While Mitchell and Snyder suggest that narrative prosthesis serves a universal function across all narrative ("deviance serves as the basis and common denominator of all narrative," they assert), they also maintain that such prostheses develop momentum from a metaphorical urge which "needs to be localized culturally and historically" (2000, 55, 164). This profitable tension between the universality of disability's "potent symbolism" (55) and its localization in specific sociocultural scenarios indicates the rich visual potential of narrative prosthesis on the Renaissance stage: in Stump's prosthetic leg in *A Larum for London*, Borachia's habituated drunkenness in *A Very Woman*, Richard III's deformities, and, to varying degrees, within all of the plays introduced in this chapter.

A second way in which narrative takes propulsion from disability difference centers upon what Quayson refers to as "aesthetic nervousness," a term indicating how the incorporation of disability affects literary-aesthetic representation. Asserting disability and the sublime as the dichotomous "constitutive points" of the literary-aesthetic field, Quayson bases his discussion upon three observations about disability in the literary-aesthetic domain: first, the fundamental tenet within disability studies that disability always serves as "an 'excessive' sign that invites interpretation, either of a metaphysical or other sort"; second, that encounters with disabled persons lead able-bodied individuals into a "subliminal fear and moral panic" based upon their recognition of the temporary nature of able-bodiedness; and third, "the degree to which the social treatment of disability has historically been multifaceted and sometimes even contradictory ... [such that] [l]iterature does not merely reflect any already socially interpreted reality, but adds another tier of interpretation" (2007, 14). From these observations, Quayson develops his theory of "aesthetic nervousness," which addresses what he refers to as the "short-circuiting" (the impeding or frustrating) of narrative that results from inclusions of disability representations in the literary-aesthetic domain. This short-circuiting occurs in three substantive ways:

- 1 by the interaction between characters within a text;
- 2 by "tension refracted across other levels of the text such as the disposition of symbols and motifs, the overall narrative or dramatic perspective, the constitution and reversals of plot structure"; and
- 3 by the interaction between reader and text.¹³

While Mitchell and Snyder suggest that narrative prosthesis clarifies characterological difference within narrative (both as spur to story, and as facilitator of narrative resolution), however, Quayson's theory suggests precisely the opposite: "aesthetic nervousness" insists that disability "short-circuits" literary narratives from the moment of its recognition (which he identifies as a "crisis of representation"), and thus leads to an "aesthetic collapse that occurs *within* the literary frameworks themselves" (2007, 25). To come at dramatic representations of "narrative prosthesis" and "aesthetic nervousness" in another way, we might reflect on Garland-Thomson's suggestion that real-world interaction between normates and disabled persons is mappable in literary frameworks as well. As she puts it, "story structures staring" by "filtering out visual sameness" and shattering normates' expectations with regard to discrepancy and the achievement of surprise by incorporations of difference (2009, 167). It is worth observing, as well, that disability difference can be perceived as still more heightened in dramatic contexts.

As a brief example of the staging of such difference within Renaissance drama, I would like to pause over this concept of the *stare*. For Garland-Thomson, author of the study *Staring: How We Look*, “baroque” staring is typified by a gape-mouthed stare of wonder resulting from encounters with the nonnormative, coupled with the awed question: “what is that?” (2009, 50). Such a quasi-medieval/Renaissance stare of stupefaction at the monstrous or prodigious yields historically, she asserts, to Enlightenment staring practices typified by what she terms the “clinical” stare (48–9). But rather than concretize them as such, we might just as well pressure this historical transition in staring practices a bit, revealing Garland-Thomson’s thesis to be tighter in historical transition than even she envisions, and in doing so to move from audience staring practices to the staging of such stares within Renaissance drama. In Act 1, scene 2 of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, for example, Leontes desperately careens from a wild-eyed baroque stare to something approaching a clinician’s as he spies his boyhood friend Polixenes “paddling palms and pinching fingers” with Leontes’ nine-months-pregnant wife, Hermione. Leontes’ baroque stare, one of shock and wonder, shifts suddenly into a skeptical, clinician’s as he employs contemporary medical knowledge to narrate his own inward, dynamic, humoral turmoil: “too hot, too hot,” he explains, “I have *tremor cordis* on me: my heart dances, but not for joy, not joy ... How can this be?”

Such Jacobean staring practices, ranging from the wonder and awe associated with encountering the marvelous, to the medically diagnostic recognition of humoral heat and a fluttering heart, reveal in this one Shakespearean moment the conflation of the two modes of staring. Acknowledging this liminal moment in staring practices opens the scene to exploration of historicized disability as we locate the language of disability at such intersections of humoral, psycho-physiological crisis. Here too, in fact, at the precise moment where the play establishes its “narrative prosthesis” – via the marked assertion of character nonnormativity, which structures the drama through to its narrative resolution – it also deploys a version of Quayson’s “aesthetic nervousness,” in that Leontes’ ostensibly sudden derangement registers between the characters in the text; between the characters and the play’s audience; and across the “tensions” articulated in point 2 above. To be clear: the narrative rupture that Leontes’ famously “diseased opinion” and subsequent murderous rage inaugurates (across the play’s sixteen-year narrative gap, by its postlapsarian imagery, and in its premature but cogent manifestation of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*) fulfills all of the features Quayson outlines as *aesthetic nervousness* and more, and deserves meticulous investigation in such light. Such a brief analysis as this indicates but one way that the literary-aesthetic models associated with disability studies allow us to reassess concepts of normalcy and difference and their deployments at a range of levels.

Future Directions

As I have written elsewhere, for years any attempts I made to introduce disability into early modern conversations were generally shrugged off: “Look to *Richard III*,” I was vaguely directed. But as this chapter shows, Renaissance dramatists went far beyond *Richard III* in exploring the meanings of ability and disability and the ways in which disabled and able people might interact with one another. What I have attempted to convey here are some of the productive tensions at work in early modern depictions of disability difference on the Renaissance stage, and I want to conclude by zeroing in on the relevance of what practicing early modern disability studies can mean in our world today. In that spirit, I have attempted to suggest some growth areas in the

field, as I see them, in the work to be done: from adapting the *jurisdictional* and *religious models* of medieval disability to the local habitations identifiable in early modern English contexts; from pushing past illuminating but overripe discussions of the “male gaze,” to engaging the more fluid and transactional possibilities of the “staring encounter”; from clarifying concepts of stigmatization in the period and its relationship to “normates” and “the ideology of ability,” to continuing to explore disability’s intersectionality with concepts of class, race and ethnicity, and gender and sexuality; from scrupulous engagement with the development of the English Poor laws, to pursuing the patient, archival recovery work that remains necessary to explore the early modern disabled lives that surely await us.

Now is the time to recognize the material and political realities of disability both “there and then” and “here and now,” and in doing so to link the nondisabled and the disabled by our similarities, for, in doing so, the disabled might finally and fully come into focus by the nondisabled and attain what we all deserve: true political recognition. Surely exploring early modern disability representations offers us a view of the past that can help refine our current ways of thinking about disability. But doing so also offers us an invitation to broaden and deepen our explorations of early modern disability such that we become enabled to move beyond *Richard III* ourselves. To come full circle: disability studies has developed in markedly productive ways since Simi Linton’s rallying cry in 1998. Quite simply, training ourselves to pursue disability difference and its implications manifested on the English Renaissance stage allows us to read as new that which we might have presumed to be settled, and doing so can condition us, and our students, not only to the historicized meanings of early modern texts, but also to the multivalent ways in which those meanings endure.

NOTES

- 1 All references to this play are to Siemon (2009). Immense thanks to friends and colleagues Allison Hobgood and Lindsey Row-Heyveld.
- 2 Disability often serves as the stuff of tragedy, of course, but just as often of comedy. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle suggests the “ugly” and the “deformed” as motivations for comedy, and Shakespeare’s comedic characters frequently confirm that thesis: Dogberry proudly identifies himself as “deformed”; Caliban is called a “monster”; Viola sees herself as a “poor monster”; and Peter Quince calls Nick Bottom “monstrous.” These terms reflect the ways in which, as David Turner (2013) has observed, comedy and disability are deeply intertwined in the period.
- 3 For disability scholarship pertaining to the classical period, see Rose (2013); Garland (1995); and Bragg (2004). For scholarship pertaining to the medieval period, see Bragg (2004); Metzler (2006); Eyler (2010); Pearman (2010); Wheatley (2010); and Rushton (2013). For scholarship relating to Renaissance England, see Hobgood and Wood (2009; 2013); Wood (2011; 2013). For analyses of the long eighteenth century, see Turner and Stagg (2006); and Deutsch and Nussbaum (2000). For scholarship regarding Victorian Britain, see Holmes (2004).
- 4 For discussion of early modern English views on the difference associated with race and ethnicity, see Hall (1995) and Floyd-Wilson (2003).
- 5 For primary texts, see, for example, Batman (1581), which offers a compendium of “all the strange Prodigies” from Eden to early modern England. See also the many collected ballads and broadsides pertaining to sociocultural perceptions of congenital disability reprinted in *A Collection of seventy-nine black-letter Ballads and Broadsides* (1870). For secondary works, see especially Paster (1993).
- 6 See Bacon ([1612] 1985); Montaigne ([1595] 2003). For secondary analyses of these works, see Moulton (1996) and Snyder (2002).
- 7 The compensatory model suggests the loss of one sense or ability is compensated by metaphysical insight, as with Homer (poet, often figured blind), Oedipus Rex

- (wise, with lower leg abnormality), Tiresius (prophet, both blind and hermaphrodite), Egil of the Icelandic *Egilsaga* (poet, prodigiously ugly and massive), and John Milton (poet, blind). Shakespeare shows his familiarity with the tradition in his depictions of the epileptic Julius Caesar and Othello, for whom Shakespeare retains epilepsy's classical reputation as a "sacred disease" while adhering to early modern medical views of epilepsy as a stigmatized illness. See Hobgood (2009) and Wood (2009).
- 8 Their explanation of the psyches of those who are "deformed" is especially problematic, but as Siebers (2008, 34–52) has shown, similar views redound into modern psychoanalysis as well.
- 9 For more on Christianity and disability, see Row-Heyveld (2009); Eiesland (1994); Stiker (1999).
- 10 As Mardy Phillipian, Jr. (2013, 150–3) observes, Carol Thomas Neely's powerful exploration of "madness" in *Distracted Subjects* (2004) would profit immensely from inclusion of disability methodologies.
- 11 For stigma in the context of disability studies, see also Coleman (1997).
- 12 Mitchell and Snyder (2000, 55–6). This feature of narrative prosthesis is often referred to as what Paul Longmore (2003) calls the "kill or cure" phenomenon; see Mitchell and Snyder (2000, 164–70) and Mitchell (2003).
- 13 Quayson (2007, 15). Quayson recognizes the value of Mitchell and Snyder's concept of narrative prosthesis, yet asserts that the "prostheticizing function is bound to fail, not because of the difficulties in erasing the effects of disability in the real world, but because the aesthetic domain is short-circuited upon encounter with disability" (26). See also Siebers (2010).

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Space and Place

Adam Zucker

There is something both elegant and commonsensical about the recent emergence of “space” and “place” as critical categories in early modern drama scholarship. Theater, inherently a spatial art form, depends in performance and on the page upon the motions of imagined bodies through imagined locations or settings. Alongside the figurative worlds called up by drama, a literal stage usually provides the material medium through which a play becomes itself for an audience. Although different historical epochs of drama embody different styles of spatial expression and action, each presumes a performance and a spectator at some distance from it, observing it, reacting to it, and therefore living through the space of it. There can be no plot, no narrative progress through time, and, most importantly, no shared experience of performed dramatic action without it.

But if “space and place” are in some sense fundamental aspects of nearly any kind of theater scholarship or drama-oriented criticism, it was not until the rise of materialist historicisms in post-1970s literary studies that work on Tudor and Stuart drama began to treat them explicitly as such. Following pioneering studies in the field by Jean-Christophe Agnew (1986), Steven Mullaney (1988), and Robert Weimann (1987), work on Renaissance drama has experienced what Sarah Dustagheer (2013) rightly calls a “spatial turn” in the form of a marked surge of writing that illuminates the conceptual and material importance of space and place to theatrical culture.¹ This “turn” (note the self-referentially spatial metaphor) has meant that the implicit, underexamined, yet definitive presence of “space” in theatrical practice has become a *de rigueur* feature of journals, publishers’ booklists, and collections like this one (e.g., Yachnin et al. 2012; Sanders 2010).² Likewise, some of the most exciting digital projects pertaining to early modern English theater revolve entirely around making the spaces and places of theatrical culture – and especially of historical London – accessible to students and researchers. This chapter will introduce a few of the features and shared interests of this new scholarship, isolate several subfields within the broader whole, and, along the way, provide a number of exemplary readings of early modern plays that demonstrate a few

of the ways in which attending to space in performance, text, and history might help us better understand drama's meanings in early modern England and in our own day.

Spatial Histories

In recent work on early modern theatrical texts, "space" often provides a means to overlay the imagined world of a play with a historical reconstruction of the world that produced it. To put it another way, the space of the play is put into conversation by critics with a version or image of the space of the extratextual or contextual world. As such, critics tend to treat space as both a socially productive, collaboratively produced substance and an object of representation. The representation of space (in textual description and/or through theatrical performance and staging) is, in this analysis, part and parcel of the social processes that shape the uses of space and its meanings in broader historical contexts. This mode of reasoning stems in part from the foundational Marxian analyses of space by Henri Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) and, secondarily, Michel de Certeau (1984). It is worth quoting the former at some length, since Lefebvre's tendency to give space and spatial practice a primary place in historical process is shared by many of the critics who approach the topic in early modern drama:

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. At the same time there is nothing imagined, unreal, or "ideal" about it as compared, for example, with science, representations, ideas or dreams. Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 73)

Both container and contained, agent and acted upon, space becomes visible in Lefebvre's work as a forceful medium of social life writ large. As David Harvey has put it, "Space must be understood as dynamic and in motion, an active moment (rather than a passive frame) in the constitution of physical, ecological, social, and political-economic life" (2001, 233). Theatrical space in particular – represented, molded, and lived through in performance – might be thought of as an interactive, expansive analogue for many of these ideas. The physical features of a stage are the product of an engagement with (although not a strict replication of) past technological or architectural conventions; those conventional physical features in turn shape the action and language that take place around them; and the interchange between stage and action is both produced by and productive of social, economic, and political networks that extend out from and more diffusely determine the cultural world that produced them in the first place. With all this in mind, the study of dramatic space can be seen as the study of integrating or disruptive relationships set out in contexts that are material, aesthetic, textual, and performative. The space of the stage or theater and the space of the imagined and material worlds outside of it work together, humming with constant vibrant tension.

While there are many ways to understand or write about these relationships, this chapter will focus for the most part on analyses that explore drama's settings alongside the physical spaces of theaters and stages. Doing so provides a straightforward entry-point for the study of early modern theater's engagement with space and spatial practice. Since the settings of plays refer to identifiable

locations with recognizable spatial or material elements, they can inspire all kinds of research inquiries. What, for example, are we being told when we find out that a scene in *Hamlet* is set in a Queen's "closet" (Lesser 2014; Yiu 2014)? What might actors think about when they find themselves in a "house in the Blackfriars," as in *The Alchemist* (Shanahan 2008; Mardock 2008); or at a market fair, as in *Bartholomew Fair* (Zucker 2011; Brown 2012; Baker 2001); or in a London pleasure garden that serves asparagus to its visitors, as in *The Spargus Garden* (Steggle 2005)? What do the forests in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Titus Andronicus* have in common (Theis 2010)? What changes when a play is set in a town in northern England or The Midlands (Sanders 2011; Thomason 2010; Stokes 2003)? In Egypt or in Scythia? On an unnamed, uncharted Mediterranean island, or on the rather better-known Malta?

Scholars of early modern English drama have found many different ways to answer these questions and others like them. Some work at a fairly abstract level, discussing new ways in which space and place were being understood or represented in other forms in order to explain the resonance of plays. John Gilles (1994), for example, explores patterns in the history of mapping and cartography, crucial producers of spatial knowledge, to shed light on early modern drama's interest in distant, hypothetically exotic lands (see also Klein 2001; Smith 2008; Fletcher 2007). Garrett Sullivan (1998), likewise, has written on Elizabethan and Jacobean technologies of land surveying to think through the social relationships bound up in the theater's ideas about "landscape." Henry Turner's work on "practical spatial arts" (2006) shows how early modern methods of "plotting" space pertain to ideas about dramatic plots in narrative frames of reference. These scholars and others like them argue that Tudor and Stuart England saw a shift in the ways in which space and place were used as knowledge-producing or knowledge-ordering tools; that is, the depiction, measurement, or shaping of space was part of a broader cultural development that valued what we now call "empirical thought" and rationalizing systems of measurement and representation. The built environment of stages and theaters and the imagined perspectives playwrights invoke were all shaped by these developments.

Other scholars have used the opportunities afforded by space and place to pursue particular modes of criticism. In addition to site-specific cultural geographies that contribute to various regional, global, and transnational studies, feminist scholarship in particular has had notable successes on this front. Alison Findlay (2006), for example, has written on the ways women involved in early modern English drama both represent and use material spaces in their own productions. Her work is related to a burst of scholarship by social and cultural historians on the motions of women through different kinds of space, be they the halls of the Stuart Court, differently valued rooms in private homes, or the doorways and streets of London (Orlin 1997; 2007; Hubbard 2012). The Duchess of Malfi in Webster's play eating apricots in her coach, or the Ladies Collegiate in Jonson's *Epicoene* wandering on their own through the streets of the West End, or even Juliet at her Veronese window (not balcony!) all become knowable in entirely new ways when we take into account how circumscribed the historical motions of women through different spaces were (Crane 2009; on Juliet's lack of a balcony, see Zucker 2011, 118–23).

As a brief case in point, consider Thomas Heywood's domestic tragedy *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, a play that erects and pressure-tests patriarchal enclosures by staging an erotic home invasion. Its central setting and organizing space is a fairly generic, rustic English home, but its narrative grapples with emerging forms of personal privacy as it works its way through stories of access, door-locks, and the potential linkages between domestic spaces and human bodies (Henderson 1986). The play's well-to-do home owner, John Frankford, invites a new friend, Wendoll, to spend time in his house enjoying his and his wife Anne's hospitality. When Frankford

is called away on business, he has Anne instruct Wendoll to act as if he himself were the owner of the house and everything within its walls:

He wills you, as you prize his love,
Or hold in estimation his kind friendship,
To make bold in his absence, and command
Even as himself were present in the house,
For you must keep his table, use his servants,
And be a present Frankford in his absence.

(6.73–8)³

These lines deliver a healthy dose of ironic foreshadowing for anyone who is familiar with the uneven gendered logic of early modern English marriage. If Wendoll is to take possession of the Frankford homestead and everything enclosed within its walls, he must take possession of Anne herself. Even though, as Natasha Korda (2002) has shown us, women were recruited by marriage into positions of domestic management, those positions were always properly structured by the assumption of their status as household objects under the spatial codes of early modern domesticity.

In a move common to many playwrights in the period, Heywood not only refers to literal spaces of the home but also uses spatial imagery and references to clarify the symbolic resonance of his setting and its ramifications. As the love-struck Wendoll pressures Anne to submit to him and betray her absent husband, Anne figures her slowly growing ardor as a twisting, wayward path: “This maze I am in / I fear will prove the labyrinth of sin” (6.159–60). Wendoll straightens Anne’s maze out, telling her that they are both upon “The path of pleasure and the gate to bliss, / Which on your lips I knock at with a kiss” (6.161–2). The mixture of metaphors here creates a bit of logical dissonance, but the general spatial strategy is clear: forward motion propelled by desire leads both Anne and Wendoll to a gateway, an entry point, that is both physiological and emblematic.

This progress toward domestic violation comes to a spatial climax as Frankford, made aware of his wife’s infidelity by a rather more faithful servant, fingers a set of keys that will lead him, door by door, into the innermost chamber of his home, where he knows he will find Anne and Wendoll *in flagrante delicto*:

This is the key that opes my outward gate;
This is the hall-door; this my withdrawing-chamber;
But this, that door that’s bawd unto my shame,
Fountain and spring of all my bleeding thoughts,
Where the most hallowed order and true knot
Of nuptial sanctity hath been profaned.
It leads to my polluted bed-chamber,
Once my terrestrial heaven, now my earth’s hell.
The place where sins in all their ripeness dwell.

(13.8–16)

Heywood here uses Frankford’s imagined progress into and through his home as a predictive figure for the revelation of the play’s central betrayal. Four keys lead him to his “polluted bed-chamber,” and we all burrow together into the ruinous fantasy of a not-so-secret space for the ripe

sins of a wife and friend. This spatial violation amplifies the gendered logic of the play in many ways. Frankford has lost control of his wife's body, a crucial sign of masculine insufficiency and disorderly marriage in the period; likewise, he has lost control (albeit temporarily) of the enclosures and apertures in his own house. Anne's powerful place within that house, a place that enables her to locate and immure her own desires, is part and parcel of her limited ability to move across and seal off both literal and symbolic boundaries. It makes perfect sense, then, that Anne's eventual punishment is her banishment by Frankford from their shared home. The play's interest in labyrinths, in mazes, and in lovers secreted away in locked rooms aligns with its broader story about the emergence of early modern privacy and the bodily betrayals that accompanied it. Even on a stage without complicated sets or explicit portrayals of sex, darkened spaces of eroticized domestic interiority become visible.

Urban Space and City Drama

The household, the distant foreign landscape, the battlefield, the aristocratic Court, the pastoral countryside, the forest – each of these settings and spaces played a crucial role for the English Renaissance stage. But the most frequently depicted – and certainly the most frequently commented upon – space of them all for drama in the period is the city, specifically London itself. While Shakespeare, most famously, set plays in abstract versions of Continental cities (such as Venice, Messina, or Verona), the vast majority of his contemporaries used the city that surrounded them as a spatial anchor. This was especially true after 1598, when, following William Houghton's *An Englishman for My Money*, the first English comedies set in recognizably precise London locations began to appear. These plays made even more obvious the doubled nature of theatrical space as a site of both experience and representation. City-set plays at the Blackfriars theater, for example, did not just depict urban space – they took place in it. As such, the staging of contemporary London in early modern drama was always an implicitly metatheatrical project, using a kind of refracted vision to put all kinds of urban residents into their imagined places. Merchants and their wives could see comedies or history plays about merchants and their wives managing their shops and homes; shoe-making apprentices could watch imagined shoe-making apprentices move through workshops and markets; sempsters might see a boy pretending to be one of them, embroidering; and prostitutes would not have to sit through all that many plays before they came across a staging of a tavern or a brothel filled with imagined versions of themselves.⁴

Yet for all these references to common knowledge and shared topographies, the stage's arrangement of city types in city spaces – like its depiction of other real-world settings – was always characterized by aesthetic transformations that distanced the imagined world of a given play from the ordinary places that inspired it. The play-world, in other words, could never truly reproduce the real world. We can see the ramifications of this most clearly in a drawing of an entirely non-English stage: "The Comic Scene," from the second of Sebastian Serlio's *Five Books of Architecture* (Orrell 1984; esp. Womack 2008).⁵ Serlio's work was first published during the same mid sixteenth-century moment in Italy that saw the codification of the idea of the three "unities" – not least of all the unity of place – in treatises by Robortello and Castelvetro. As such, we might think of Serlio's drawing as a kind of spatializing supplement to textual theories of drama. The typical staged space for comedy, Serlio tells us, should contain "private houses ... belonging to citizens, merchants, lawyers, parasites and other similar characters. Above all there

should be a bawd's house and an Inn. A temple is absolutely essential" (Serlio 1611, sig. N2). Serlio's comic scene, however, is not a perfect mirror of a real street somewhere in Florence. The set, Serlio tells us, must be built with cornices, arches, and balconies sharply askew to provide an illusion of depth and distance. Densely developed but entirely impossible, mimetic only from a single viewing point, calmly arranged but stuffed with urban material, Serlio's inaccurate street sets up "a formal tension between unity and heterogeneity," as Peter Womack puts it (2008, 40), evoking a decidedly interested, subjective space of social diversity centered by the fiction of an inevitable endpoint. To find that endpoint, we need only follow the lines of the drawing reproduced in Figure 35.1.

It is too easy and, as far as drama produced in early modern Europe is concerned, simply wrong, to claim that all comedy ends in marriage. Yet the depth-effect created on Serlio's stage is organized by a single perspective point toward which the city scene of bawd, citizen, and



Figure 35.1 "The Comic Scene." From Sebastian Serlio, *The First Book of Architecture*, sig. N2, 22270. Reproduced by permission of the The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

merchant leads the eye. That point is located dead-center in the door of the “absolutely essential” temple, designed in the style of a Tuscan church. The linear progression of comic narrative is reproduced in the illusion of three dimensions hung on Serlio’s distorted grid: the place of marriage, the site of comedy’s assumed resolution, becomes the focal point of drama’s city-space. As such, the Serlian scene does with stylized architecture and perspectival scenery what early modern English playwrights do with formal conventions and abstract gestures toward shifting locations: each refigures historical spaces of social variety and contestation into the always ideological spaces of theater (Turner 2006; Yiu 2014).

London’s theaters did not adopt perspectival scenery until after the Restoration, and the kind of city scene presented by Serlio, although deeply influential for Inigo Jones’s masque constructions, was never reproduced on a pre-Restoration English commercial stage. But Serlio’s trick of perspective makes it easier to see the ways in which spatial manipulations of all sorts can function as social mediators or as organizing logics for the spaces and places reimagined in drama. We can see this process at work in Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*, a play more often cited for its depiction of a rambunctious cross-dressing Moll Cutpurse than for its sensitive staging of urban space (for important exceptions, see Stage 2009; Harris 2004, 178–81). But like many other Jacobean city comedies, *The Roaring Girl* often explicitly uses references to spatial relationships to explore links between commercial practice and theatrical performance in early modern London.

The Roaring Girl was first staged at the outdoor Fortune theater in 1611, and like the still-popular *Henry V*, it openly drew attention to the material site of its own original performance. The second scene of the play takes place in Alexander Wentgrave’s “parlour,” a setting that Wentgrave describes at some length in terms that bring the Fortune and its audience directly into his home:

The furniture that doth adorn this room
 Cost many a fair grey groat ere it came here;
 But good things are most cheap when they’re most dear.
 Nay, when you look into my galleries –
 How bravely they are trimmed up – you shall swear
 You’re highly pleased to see what’s set down there:
 Stories of men and women, mixed together,
 Fair ones with foul, like sunshine in wet weather –
 Within one square a thousand heads are laid
 So close that all of heads the room seems made;
 As many faces there, filled with blithe looks,
 Show like the promising titles of fair books
 Writ merrily, the readers being their own eyes,
 Which seem to move and to give plaudities;
 And here and there, whilst with obsequious ears
 Thronged heads do list, a cutpurse thrust and leers
 With hawk’s eyes for his prey – I need not show him,
 By a hanging villanous look yourselves may know him,
 The face is drawn so rarely. Then, sir, below,
 The very floor, as ’twere, waves to and fro,
 And, like a floating island, seems to move
 Upon a sea bound in with shores above.

(1.2.11–32)⁶

Wentgrave's monologue reproduces the space of the theater as a space of commercial exchange, of consumption and the consumed. It begins by noting the cost of the "furniture that doth adorn this room," a reference not only to the properties that may have been on stage, but also to the literal structures of the theater itself: the "galleries," the timber, and the chairs itemized in the contract for the Fortune's construction in 1600 (Chambers 1923, 2: 435–43). Throughout this passage, the spatial aspects of the Fortune are insistently invoked: the "square" that holds "a thousand heads;" the waving "floor" made up by the groundlings in the yard; and presumably the stage, "like a floating island" in a sea of playgoers. Working alongside these references to the material theater is an extended conceit that draws the audience itself into the world of goods that make up Wentgrave's parlor. Imagined as the subjects of a merchant's picture galleries, or as visual "stories" of themselves, those who paid to see *The Roaring Girl* are here transformed into expensive, tasteful furnishings purchased by a character on stage. This figurative reversal of the more commonsense economic relationship inherent to commercial theater (here, the audience members are the commodities, rather than the performance or the play-text) continues as Wentgrave compares the faces in his galleries to "the promising titles of fair books" (l. 22). First furniture, then a set of title-pages laid out in a stationer's stall: these images of the audience make the Fortune out to be a space flooded with vendible objects. Like the expanding markets of London, however, the Fortune is also the space of consuming agents. With a paradoxical twist to the terms of the conceit ("the readers being their own eyes"), Wentgrave's monologue positions the title-page paintings as their own viewers. The commodified audience members are suddenly repositioned as potential consumers of the play and of the vision that makes up the gallery of people watching it. And with the helpful reminder that there are cutpurses about, the playgoers are told that they have purses to cut, that they are wandering about the city with the means to participate in its vast commercial scene – indeed, by paying for their admission to the Fortune, they have already begun to do so.

The investigation of urban commercial space in *The Roaring Girl* continues in its highly formal depiction of a street scene at the beginning of the play's second act. As the stage directions have it: "*three shops open in a rank: the first a pothecary's shop, the next a feather shop, the third a sempster's shop*" (2.1.sd). Each shop comes with its own married couple, and each gets business from the play's gallants (and the Roaring Girl herself) over the course of the ensuing scene. Without the benefit of an elaborate Serlian scenography, this "rank" of stalls likely would have been achieved through an arrangement of tables or boards set up in front of the three doors (perhaps two doors and a discovery space) presumed to open onto the stage of the Fortune theater. George Kernodle (1944), in his history of scenic organization in early modern European visual cultures, uses the term "architectural symbols" to describe common framing elements like the Fortune's doors: the purpose-built stages in London, for all their relative simplicity, relied heavily on these sorts of symbols, using entrance and exit spaces as flexible signifiers for place and action.⁷

In the case of this particular scene, a frenzied whirl-a-gig of exchange spins across the level plane of the stage. Where Serlio's stage pulled us toward a centralized, normative logic of comic marriage with its vanishing-point temple door, Dekker and Middleton use spatial patterning to bring order to a series of fractured episodes, capturing and subtly aestheticizing early modern London's chaotic, diversifying commercial energies. As the scene progresses, the play's gallants spread out among the shops, and the audience's attention is forced to move rapidly from one part of the stage to the next, from one sexual and/or commercial transaction to another. The unusual stage directions that mark the shifts in focus from door to door register some of this oscillation: "*At the feather shop now ... At the sempster's shop now ... The feather shop again*" (2.1.sd). One moment,

Jack Dapper is decrying the “general feather” and asking for a new, as-yet unheralded feather for his hat from Mistress Tiltyard; the next moment, the Openworks are bantering in their sempster’s shop about the shirts and smocks they’re selling; the next, a cross-dressed Moll Frith arrives at the tobacco shop where, amidst the smoke, Laxton fantasizes about buying a sexual encounter with her. Recall David Harvey’s sense for the theoretical category of space as an “active moment” and a point of intersection for “physical, ecological, social, and political-economic life” (2001, 233). Here, the space of the market is reproduced within the conventional space of the theater as a kinetic, transactional network of fashion and sex, of gender play and consumer desire, of violence and community consolidation. But for all its hectic motion, *The Roaring Girl’s* shop scene is given just enough visual order by the Fortune’s stage to render coherent the contentious production of status and social power in London’s diversifying marketplaces. There is, in other words, an incorporative, explanatory logic built into the spatial expression of the scene (cf. Agnew 1986; Postles 2004).

Present Space and the Digital Turn

As I hope the preceding discussion might indicate, research on early modern drama’s city spaces has much to tell us about our own moment of contentious urban development. Like twenty-first century New York or London, the home of Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare, Thomas Middleton, and their contemporaries was a city in flux: riven by economic disparity, shot through with thrilling cultural possibility, and ultimately, for all its growth and change, a perplexing object of fascination for its visitors and inhabitants (Harding 1990; 2001; Merritt 2005; Brett-James 1935). Like the sprawling, densely populated urban centers of our time, early modern London was being reshaped by new developments in urban architecture and city planning, by emerging luxury housing projects that displaced poorer residents, by struggles for spatial control waged between the wealthiest members of a nation’s population and its mobile laborers. While I wouldn’t want to overstate the point (obviously, urban growth and demography under late capitalism look very different than they did in 1600), it seems clear that city space was then as it is now: a powerful magnet for people seeking out new pleasures, new powers, and new fashions. When we work through these patterns as they are represented in early modern drama, we are looking back at a moment that can seem entirely discontinuous from our own. But Tudor and Stuart London’s threats of plague, its unruly commercial energies, its difficult overlays of gendered identities, nationalities, political ranks, and social status – all these elements and more, so crucial for the plays that restage urban space – are problems we experience and grapple with today.

Early modern urban space, in other words, like so many of the other spaces and places called up by and examined in early modern drama, may appear to be distant or foreign. But in theatrical performance, in scholarship, in writing, and in the classroom, distant space can and should be deeply linked to present affect and present action. With this in mind, I would like, in closing, to direct the reader to the growing number of digital resources that can help teachers, researchers, and students alike begin to explore the shapes and meanings of early modern theatrical space. As of the writing of this chapter, we can wander through a digital map of London that provides an ever growing encyclopedia of place-based reference and historical description (Jenstad 2016). We can browse the diverse records of performance, regulation, praise, and critique in the Records of Early English Drama (REED) project’s Early Modern London Theatres database (Maclean 2016). And we can get lost in the forest of archival records and historical analyses pertaining to parishes,

neighborhoods, streets, and buildings on the vast and growing site, British History Online (Institute of Historical Research 2016). This is but a small sample of the ever growing number of sites changing the way scholars and students alike encounter and make use of primary and secondary materials.

In some ways, the vastness of the digital realm, the infinitely expansive space of our own networked institutions and archives, is becoming increasingly disorienting. Without generous guides like Janelle Jenstad at the Map of Early Modern London and Sally-Beth Maclean at the REED project (to say nothing of the teams of students and collaborators who work with them and others), we will quickly lose our way as we click and swipe from place to place. But as we make our spatial turns in digital contexts, we can ease into our disorientation and learn from it. In an epoch of handheld, all-knowing direction-givers resting in the pockets of the earth's wealthier citizens, it is becoming harder and harder to get lost in the real world. Perhaps our difficult digital wanderings might serve as a model for the feeling of a newcomer to early modern London or a citizen exploring a new neighborhood, wandering along streets with no signposts, past buildings with no address numbers, seeing shops identified only by the pictures on their signs. If we get confused as we piece together the meaningful shapes and patterns, places and spaces, of early modern England's theatrical culture, we may, in fact, be living through a version of that period's own spatial experience.

NOTES

- Thanks are due here to Josephine Hardman, who ably assisted me with the research for this essay.
- 1 Dustagheer's essay can be read alongside this one for a complementary perspective on the role of space and place in current scholarship on early modern English drama. For other overviews see West (2002); Hiscock (2004); Fitzpatrick (2011).
 - 2 Cf. entries in many recent compendia of essays with the words "Handbook of" or "Companion to" in their titles.
 - 3 Text from Scobie (1985).
 - 4 The still-growing body of scholarship on city comedy is already too expansive to be cited comprehensively here. General studies include Howard (2007); Gibbons (1980); Dillon (2000); Zucker (2011); Hopkins (2008); Grantley (2008); Easterling (2007); Stanev (2014).
 - 5 Although it originally appeared in mid sixteenth-century Italian editions, the woodcut reproduced in this chapter and the textual citations that follow are taken from the 1611 translation of Serlio into English.
 - 6 Text from Mulholland (1987).
 - 7 See, especially, Kernodle (1944, 130) for the discussion of the architectural backgrounds shared by stained glass windows, *tableaux vivants*, engravings, and London's stages. For related work about the tension between generic stage space and specific setting, see Limon (2003) and Rochester (2010).

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The Matter of Wit and the Early Modern Stage

Ian Munro

What is wit? When Iago tells an impatient Roderigo in *Othello* that “We work by wit, not by witchcraft, / And wit depends on dilatory time” (2.3.345–6), is he talking about the same thing as Falstaff in *2 Henry IV*, when he declares, “I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men” (1.2.8–9) – or Rosalind, in *As You Like It*, when she says, “Make the doors upon a woman’s wit, and it will out at the casement” (4.1.138–9)? When the verbal contract with the audience at the start of *Bartholomew Fair* states that “it shall be lawful for any man to judge ... to the value of his place, provided always his place get not above his wit” (Ind.78–81), does Ben Jonson mean the same quality as when Lovewit in *The Alchemist* exclaims, “I love a teeming wit, as I love my nourishment” (5.1.16)?

In these examples, wit seems to dance between an inherent ability to judge, an improvisatory practice or stratagem, a fertile substance that one may feed on or that reproduces itself in others, and a (gendered) motive force that eludes constraints. Even within closer metaphorical contexts, wit remains profoundly slippery. When the King of Navarre in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* imagines his courtier Biron’s gleeful reaction to his infatuation and declares, “How will he scorn, how will he spend his wit!” (4.3.143), he seems to have in mind a different kind of transaction than Valentine’s assessment of Proteus’ infatuation in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, “a folly bought with wit” (1.1.34). Biron will pay out satirical jests until his inspiration fails, while Proteus has bankrupted his store of common sense to purchase love trifles: a temporary exhaustion of a limitless ability (lightly framed by sexual innuendo) contrasts a permanent depletion of a precious resource. In John Fletcher’s *Wit without Money*, when the young prodigal Valentine (who has squandered his country estate and abandoned rural propriety in favor of city sophistications) declares he is now landlord of “all purses / That wit and pleasure opens” (1.1.163–4), the urban transformation of his wit seems distinct from that of the clown Shorthose, as assessed by the maid Luce: “You have glean’d since you came to London ... / Here every tavern teaches you, the pint pot / Has so belabour’d you with wit ... / That now there’s no talking to you” (2.3.28–34). Valentine’s wit, as

the title of the play suggests, is a kind of savvy making-do inherent to his character, the power of which is intensified by the urgency of empty pockets; Shorthose's wit, by contrast, functions as a commodity with a circulatory and accumulative quality, laboriously gleaned in tavern conversations and distributed to others. One might even say Shorthose's wit is money, the coin of the realm for clowns – and yet distinct from the spendings of either Biron or Proteus.

Wit spans the stages of the English Renaissance, from the earliest plays of John Lyly and the other "University Wits" in the 1580s to the late Caroline comedies of James Shirley and Richard Brome in the 1640s (on the former, see Kinney 2012; on the latter, Zucker 2011). In this regard the theater was participating in (and stealing from, and being robbed by) a vast outpouring of witty and jocular publications: satires in verse and prose, jestbooks, ballads, broadsides, *novelle*, coney-catching pamphlets, essays, epigrams, and erotica, among others. Nor was wit restricted to the ambit of comedy: rarely is a Renaissance tragedy (and usually an unsuccessful one) unleavened with witty interludes and satirical observations. Almost without exception, every major playwright of the period makes a claim to wit – however often other writers might challenge that claim. With this proliferation of witty material is a multiplication of the meanings of wit, as disparate literary, cultural, and social practices find themselves implicated in and articulated by wittiness. By the Restoration a more coherent sense of wit begins to assert itself, if never entirely successfully. Wit is a dominant topic, perhaps the dominant topic, of Restoration comedy (although intriguingly a less common word in play titles than it was in the earlier period), a prominence buttressed by critical discussions as well as the continued flood of printed popular wit. Wit plays an important role in the philosophical discourse of the later seventeenth century, with both John Locke and Thomas Hobbes giving it attention, and it becomes a crucial analytical tool in the ongoing assessment of earlier literature: John Dryden's judicious comparison of the abundant wit of Shakespeare to the frugal wit of Jonson in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* lays the groundwork for at least two centuries of dramatic criticism as it seals the reputation of Jonson in the bargain. By contrast, as illustrated by this chapter's opening inventory, the idea of wit in the Renaissance can seem plastic to the point of disintegration.

Wit's linguistic genealogy, the overlay of meanings it acquired in the Renaissance, offers a kind of diagram of the complexities of wit as a concept. Through a comprehensive study of recorded uses of the term across two centuries, the linguist Paivi Koivisto-Alanko identifies three linguistic centers for "wit": perceptive (relating to consciousness and the senses); cognitive (relating to mental faculties, reason, and superior intelligence); and expressive (relating to liveliness of fancy, verbal and linguistic dexterity, quickness of thought) (2000, 207). At the start of the fifteenth century the dominant center was cognitive, but with a large cluster of meanings surrounding perception; by the end of the sixteenth century the perceptive center had largely disappeared, and the dominant center of cognition had instead produced a growing subsidiary center of expression, which would itself become dominant by the second half of the seventeenth century. The etymological trajectory of "wit" in the English Renaissance is thus the decline of perception and a movement from cognition to expression – a linguistic transformation facilitated by an increasing tendency to see wit not as a faculty belonging to all but as a quality belonging only to a superior few. In the broadest sense, the valences of wit shift from something one *has* to something one *does* – at least if one is the sort of person who does such things.

Despite the undeniable significances of this shift, to see wit only in terms of a historical progression risks trying to "make the doors upon it," ignoring its heterodox, paradoxical qualities – as if it were merely an accident that so many divergent ideas attached themselves to a single word. As the ensuing discussion will illustrate, it would be better to consider wit as what

Raymond Williams (2014) would call a keyword: a term that is culturally overdetermined; that is used to articulate and negotiate deep social contradictions; and that is made to carry far more significance than it can easily bear.

Witty Underpinnings

Two significant critical works, neither expressly about the theater – one older, one recent – illustrate something of the range of topics, practices, products, and cultural and social formations that connect to theatrical wit in the Renaissance. William Crane's *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (1937) addresses itself to the methods and materials of wit: what sorts of literary devices were involved in witty writing, and what were the most important sources of these devices. In Crane's analysis, Renaissance English wit was principally a method of amplification and ornamentation, one which drew in equal measure from formal rhetorical figures associated with invention (exclamation, apostrophe, simile, copia, prosopopoeia) and from a plethora of printed material exemplifying such devices, from commonplace books and miscellanies to rhetorical manuals, educational treatises, and conduct books (above all, Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*). Crane's analysis leads directly into rhetorical education, especially to Cicero's *De oratore*. The first book of *De oratore* devotes considerable discussion to the value of *ingenium* to the orator, through a dialogue that deliberately parallels Plato's discussions of *euphuia* in the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* (where it is the first requirement of the ideal statesman and the ideal orator, respectively), and which draws upon Aristotle's use of *euphuia* to describe the ability to create vivid metaphors in the *Rhetoric* (Crane [1937] 1964, 82). Both *ingenium* and *euphuia* mean natural endowment or characteristic talent, and both terms were almost invariably translated as "wit" in the many English rhetorics and educational manuals of the sixteenth century that build on Cicero's work in order to instruct readers in the development of a full and ornate rhetorical style. Like Plato, who in the *Laws* discusses the danger of *euphuia* in an unjust or intemperate man, Cicero treats *ingenium* with some suspicion, noting how "unrestrained wit tended to run away with its possessor," and emphasizing "the need of adding discipline to wit" through the proper imitation of earlier models (Crane [1937] 1964, 83, 84). As Crane demonstrates, for the English Renaissance these models were principally found not only in Cicero and other classical rhetoricians but also in more recent compilations of adages, proverbs, maxims, similitudes, comparisons, examples, jests, memorable sayings, epistolary exercises, and so forth – especially those collected by Erasmus in the early sixteenth century, which were translated, republished, and repackaged throughout the earlier modern period. Crane concludes with a discussion of Lyly's plays and prose works, illustrating Lyly's dependence on Erasmian models in formulating his embellished style of witty display (see also Henderson 2008). Lyly's *Euphuus: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and its sequel, *Euphuus His England* (1580), epitomized the ornate "euphuistic" conversational style fashionable in the late sixteenth century (Guenther 2002) – a style Shakespeare would vigorously parody in the rhetorical missteps of Polonius, Falstaff, Bottom, and other artificially "comparative" speakers. Yet traces of Lyly's ingenious verbal performances remain visible throughout the period, providing a model for comic dialogue that persevered (Kinney 2012, 15–16).

As Crane explains, he was drawn into this subject through "a general survey of the relations of the members of the literary fraternity in London during the quarter century from 1590 to 1615" ([1937] 1964, 2), something he had compiled as a background to writing about the poetry of

John Donne, who had been an active participant in “the meetings of the wits” (Crane 1964, 2). Seeking to characterize these literary relations through the topic of wit, he (unsurprisingly) “found it almost impossible to define the word.” Michelle O’Callaghan (2007) begins with the same “literary fraternity,” but instead of moving into their common rhetorical education she analyzes the social dynamics of their overlapping clubs and communities, particularly in the witty performances that characterized both actual gatherings and virtual assemblies in print and on the stage. In these communities, which were strongly linked to the law schools (the Inns of Court), the royal court, Parliament, and the universities, and which were dominantly located in the burgeoning West End of London, performing wit was principally a convivial practice, one that finds its model in the ideal humanist banquet illustrated in Stephano Guazzo’s *La civil conversazione* (1574) and other treatises, where “the act of voluntarily entering into social contracts with one another based on trust and sodality creates a safe place for play and performance, and the discussion of philosophy and politics” (O’Callaghan 2007, 5). In this environment, wit becomes a kind of phatic commodity, traded between peers, albeit a commerce that included “ritualized forms of aggression that, in fact, helped to constitute the social space of the convivial society” (6). For example, flyting, the practice of satirical attacks on specific persons, common in the revels of the Inns of Court, “imagines a conflicted, fraught social space” in which the performance of wit “negotiated the plurality of the new metropolis, with its conflicted ideologies and errant trajectories, and improvised social identities and sociable practices” (31, 34). While Crane positions Lyly as the theatrical exemplar of the witty uses of rhetorical education, O’Callaghan’s principal figure for wit is Jonson, in both the typically antagonistic nature of his social and urban engagements and the persistent emphasis he places on wit as a power of discrimination.

In the broadest sense, Crane’s and O’Callaghan’s framings of wit might be articulated through an opposition between rhetoric and sociability, with the former placing emphasis on the method of creating wit and the latter on the effects of wit in the world. While Crane’s analysis turns on the complexities of Ciceronian *ingenium*, and the necessity of disciplining natural wit through education and imitation, O’Callaghan’s extensive focus on the civility and incivility of wit has more in common with Aristotle’s exploration of *eutrapelia* in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: companionable wit as a social virtue that knits together gatherings and communities (Ghose 2011; Prescott 2003). Of course, rhetoric and sociability are not actual opposites, and neither Crane nor O’Callaghan ignore the other term: rhetoric is ultimately a persuasive discipline, assessed through its effect on its audience, and rhetorical invention is an important vehicle for negotiating and reinforcing the *urbanitas* of elite social groups.

Conjunctions of rhetoric and sociability characterize the work of many other critical explorations of early modern wit. The social dimension of witty rhetoric is aptly illustrated by the work of Christopher Holcomb (2001), for example, whose analysis of the “discourse of jesting” in rhetorical and courtesy manuals stresses the opportunities and hazards of using wit in rhetoric: complexities found in Cicero and Quintilian, but strongly inflected by the historical context of Renaissance England, where expanding social and economic and geographical mobility was creating new types of interactions and exacerbating social anxieties. For more on the rhetorical dimension of sociable wit, we might turn to Lynne Magnusson’s exploration (2008) of what she calls “scoff culture” in the Inns of Court, where forensic techniques are applied to aggressive social games – an analysis that leads into the combative wittiness of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, where the king rightly winces at the sport Biron’s wit will find in his romantic vulnerability. James Biester’s *Lyric Wonder* makes it clear that the literary use of wit by coterie poets such as Donne – what Samuel Johnson would later famously label metaphysical wit, *discordia concors* – was always

inflected by its social implications: the practice of wit was a “dangerous game” played by aspiring courtiers vying for distinction, presenting themselves as “member[s] of an intellectual elite capable of maintaining the state” (1997, 69).

Rhetoric and sociability are also central concerns of Renaissance Humanism, and the work of Anne Lake Prescott (1987; 2003) and Barbara Bowen (1998; 2004) has done much to prove the salience of wit and jesting to the thinkers of the Italian Renaissance. As Bowen has noted, “*facetiae* [jests] are . . . an important component of *inventio*” in *De oratore*, “capable of influencing the audience, crushing the adversary, and/or conciliating the judge” (1998, 410). This rhetorical importance continued for the Humanists and extended to further areas: the value of wit for courtly self-fashioning (especially in *The Courtier*, which extensively redacts *De oratore*’s analysis of jesting); the therapeutic benefits of mirth, through both the physical act of laughter and the psychological benefits of companionship; and the social and intellectual ideal of the *vir facetus*, the man of wit, the perfect embodiment of *eutrapelia* (Prescott 2003; Luck 1958). Italian Humanists compiled collections of *facetiae* for both recreation and serious study, merry tales and quick answers that would later be republished in English jestbooks, which would typically obscure their scholarly patrimony with local color (Lipking 1971; Bowen 2004; Prescott and Munro 2013). The conjunction of Humanist rhetoric and sociability most relevant for an understanding of the drama of the period is found in Joel Altman’s *The Tudor Play of Mind*. Altman illustrates how a substantial portion of Tudor and Elizabethan drama has its structural origins in the formal questions of forensic rhetoric, especially the practice of arguing *in utramque partem*, on both sides of the question. This drama thus translates the abstract oppositions and structural ambivalence of academic exercises into embodied, dialogical conflicts that speak to “the concerns of everyday life in the period” (1978, 4) – a movement from “thesis to hypothesis” especially facilitated by the pedagogical practice of submitting the comedies of Terence to rhetorical analysis (1978, ch. 5). Thus the Ciceronian *ingenium* that allows the orator to persuade, baffle, or inspire with words is refracted into the witty devices and stratagems that resolve the conflicts of dramatic comedy – the appreciation of which is intended for “the intellectual and spiritual enrichment of the citizens of the polity” (6).

Yet if rhetoric and sociability are hardly opposites, there is still something significant to the idea of wit as caught, somehow, between the rhetorical and the social: between the act of creation and the environment of that creation; between that which derives from a process of education and that which derives from an immediate situation; between that which is the result of *imitatio* and that which is fundamentally inimitable, aleatory, mysterious, evanescent. In *The Courtier* (as translated by Thomas Hoby in 1561), one speaker declares that there is no art of jesting because it must be instantaneous: “That quippie ought to be shott out and hit the pricke beefore a man can descerne that he that speaketh it can thinke upon it, elles it is colde and litle woorth” (Castiglione [1561] 1994, 151). Another replies that the art lies in the disciplining of certain kinds of wit: “in ech mans mind, of howe good a witt soeuer he be, there arrise conceites both good and badd, and more and lesse, but then iudgement and art doeth polishe and correct them, and chouseth the good and refuseth the bad” (152). The courtly art of the jest is thus an art of silence, the ability to judge when one must suppress the bubbling up of hazardous invention. As in the discussion of jesting in *De oratore* that it imitates, analysis quickly slides into inventory without reaching any firm conclusions; the speakers recollect notable instances of wit, detailing the specific social environment that made each jest hit its mark, and causing renewed laughter among the current interlocutors. Such slippages themselves suggest characteristics of the idea of wit, which Jean-Luc Nancy has argued are “inseparable from the form and nature of [a witty]

utterance ... which is, in its turn, inseparable from that which utters it ... thus also from the act of utterance and, by an inescapable contiguity, from the context ... of the act of utterance” (1978, 23). To be witty (or to be perceived as witty), one must say witty things, which means one must speak in a witty fashion, which means one must have wit (or, more problematically, have borrowed wit) to begin with: wit is thus, in Nancy’s wry estimation, “a logical, semiotic, semantic, psychological, philosophical, sociological notion” (23–4). We might add that theatrical wit serves to highlight these interdependencies, in that the wittiness of a character must be established through the union of the playwright’s rhetorical skill and the social imperatives of the situation in which the would-be wit is placed. These inextricable dramatic elements are then compounded into the contexts (social, economic, political) of the theatrical performance.

Wit in the World: Community and Commodity

In terms of dramatic history, one might use Koivisto-Alanko’s historical shift from perceptive-cognitive wit to cognitive-expressive wit to position the period of Shakespeare, Jonson, Fletcher, Beaumont, Middleton, Marston, *et alia* as bookended by the “witty” interludes of the Tudor period at one end and Restoration comedy at the other end (see Munro 2010 for a discussion of Marston’s *The Malcontent*). An early play like *Wit and Science* (c.1539–47), by John Redford, treats wit as a matter of perception and understanding. To win the love of Lady Science, Wit must find her on Mount Parnassus after slaying the giant Tediousness – a quest only fulfilled after many impediments and developments (including being killed by Tediousness and revived by Honest Recreation; falling under the spell of Idleness and wearing the coat of Ignorance; recognizing his folly in the mirror of Reason and accepting the help of Instruction; and so on). Allegorical in structure, *Wit and Science* and other wit interludes personify good and bad habits of thought within a framework that is dominantly instructive (see Mills 2007). The tenor of the play is clearly educational and cognitive – that is, in order to find knowledge (*scientia*), wit (as understanding) must be disciplined by study – but the characterological deficiencies of Wit are dominantly related to perception (especially self-perception), judgment, and common sense. By contrast, in a Restoration comedy like George Etherege’s *Man of Mode*, wit is almost entirely a social construction: the means of navigating the contradictions of erotic pursuits, managing one’s social standing, and achieving matrimonial union. The perceptive implications of wit are mostly reduced to recognizing the inappropriate social authority of fools like Sir Fopling Flutter: the expression of wit – inflected by the perpetual anxiety of separating one’s own performances (in jests, courtesy, romance) from the performances of foppish falsewits – matters much more.

One could thus see a play like *Love’s Labour’s Lost* as mapping a transition between these positions. The play begins with the express pursuit of study, as the King of Navarre and his lords dedicate themselves to contemplation and a “war against your own affections / And the huge army of the world’s desires” (1.1.9–10), recapitulating the dynamics of *Wit and Science* – a point reinforced by Longueville’s observation, “dainty bits / Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits” (1.1.26–7). Just as Wit in *Wit and Science* is initially defeated by the tedium of learning, so the lords’ attention to their studies collapses with the arrival of the Princess of France and her ladies, and the play moves rapidly into the realm of social games and romantic challenges. On their arrival, the ladies assess the wit of the lords in terms that illustrate its novel senses. Longueville, Maria says, has “a sharp wit matched with too blunt a will” (2.1.49); according to Katherine, Dumaine “hath wit to make an ill shape good” (2.1.59); and Biron’s eye, Rosaline

informs us, “begets occasion for his wit, / For every object that the one doth catch / The other turns to a mirth-moving jest” (2.1.69–71). Implicitly strengthened by education – both Longueville’s cutting words and Dumaine’s sophistical ability to turn foul into fair strongly suggest the development of rhetorical practice – wit seems ready to leave study behind and venture into the real world. Yet the educational aspect of the play returns in the final scene, as the news of the death of the King of France cuts short the merriments and love games, and the ladies directly critique the purposes to which the wit of the lords has been addressed, insisting on reformation and penance.

Phil Withington has discussed *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in terms of the problems of civility, as part of a larger analysis of the concept of wit from the Elizabethans to Thomas Hobbes. Arguing (partly via O’Callaghan) that the idea of wit “legitimated and celebrated a range of communicative conventions and codes (both textual and social) that challenged the boundaries of ostensibly ‘civil’ behaviour” (2011, 157), he suggests that early modern wit played an underappreciated role in the civilizing process, facilitating a dialectic between (conventional) civility and anticivility that expanded the reach and range of civil society. *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, in this schema, is centrally concerned with recuperating wit for civility, an aim it advances by positioning female wit as both more powerful and more civil than male wit, thus rescuing female wit from the anticivil associations it typically had. In the end, “To earn [Rosaline’s] love Berowne must learn, in effect, to make his wit civil” (Withington 2011, 191). Yet Biron’s response to Rosaline problematizes reading the play in terms of the successful recuperation of wit. Rosaline commands Biron to spend the next year visiting the sick and using “all the fierce endeavor of your wit / To enforce the pained impotent to smile,” a task she frames in terms of disciplining his wit: “that’s the way to choke a gibing spirit” (5.2.830–1, 835). If you can make the sick laugh, she continues, I will accept you even with this fault; if you cannot, throw away your wit and I will be “right joyful of your reformation” (5.2.846). Biron’s response indicates that he does not really understand her point, or chooses to ignore it: “A twelvemonth? Well, befall what will befall, / I’ll jest a twelvemonth in an hospital” (5.2.847–8). Rather than abandoning wit, Biron seeks to make it work miracles. The idea of tempering or reforming wit is thus undercut: as with the interrupted love stories, the play points us toward a resolution that is not reachable.

We might also want to be wary of making *Love’s Labour’s Lost* characterize the play of wit on the Renaissance stage, at least to the degree that its aristocratic trappings and elite civility obscure important aspects of its cultural production. A somewhat different historical transition from *Wit and Science* is presented in what have become known as the Parnassus plays, a series of three anonymous dramas produced at Cambridge toward the end of the sixteenth century. In the first play, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (Macray 1886), the stages of the four-year university degree are rendered in allegorical form, as two students, Philomusus (“lover of the Muses”) and Studioso, journey (like Wit) toward Mount Parnassus, impeded along the way by various unstudious pupils: the drunkard Madido, the lover Amoretto, the puritan Stupido, and most interestingly, the malcontented and materialistic Ingenioso, who laments the poverty of the life of the mind: “Why, our emptie-handed sattine sutes do make more account of some foggie faulkner than of a wittie scholler, had rather rewarde a man for setting of a hayre than a man of wit for making of a poeme” (5.622–5). The structure of the play thus closely follows the educational model of *Wit and Science*, but its local context introduces a social critique unavailable to the more abstract interlude. Furthermore, instead of perceptive “Wit” as protagonist, we have expressive “Ingenioso” (from *ingenium*) as antagonist, a danger to the academic quest.

In *The Return from Parnassus*, the former students encounter each other again and relate their fortunes; Ingenioso's prediction of academic poverty has come true for all of them. Ingenioso announces that he is now a published writer: "I have bene posted to everie poste in Paules churchyarde," the principal book market in London (Macray 1886; 1.161–3). Philomusus exclaims, "I am glad ... thy father hath lefte thee suche a good stocke of witt to set up withall!" (1.165–7), but Ingenioso, citing his continued poverty, disagrees: "I see wit is but a phantasme and idea, a quareling shadowe that will seldome dwell in the same roome with a full purse, but commonly is the idle folower of a forlorne creature" (1.169–72). To Studioso's exhortation to "husbande thy witt, if thou beest wise" (1.184), Ingenioso retorts, "for the husbanding of my witt I put it out to interest, and make it returne twoo pamphlets a weeke" (1.205–7). In this exchange, the old metaphor of a witty patrimony – common sense, mother wit, as in Valentine's description of Proteus in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* – is transposed from intellectual capital into a poor kind of financial capital, producing plenty of material for the book trade but little wealth. Entering the marketplace, wit is literalized into matter, the "stocke" or property of its creator, whose creative labor circulates as a commodity (on the commodity of wit, see Halasz 1997, 70–1).

In *The Second Return from Parnassus*, the transformation of wit from inherent quality to circulating commodity has progressed further, even as the fortunes of the students have sunk lower. Ingenioso, having moved to London, now styles himself a moral satirist, although we initially see him engaged in flogging his "Catalogue of Cambridge Cuckolds," telling a printer "wit is dearer than thou takest it to bee" and the volume will sell better than "all these bookes of exhortations and Catechismes" (Macray 1886; 1.341, 345). He further demands high payment: "Ile be paid deare euen for the dreggs of my wit: little knowes the world what belongs to the keeping of a good wit in waters, dietts, drinckes, Tobacco, &c. it is a dainty and a costly creature, and therefore I must be payd sweetly" (1.354–8). In this complex double image, wit-as-cognition is "dainty" and hungry for material luxury, while wit-as-expression is "dregs," exemplifying what another printer calls "the filth that falleth from so many draughty inuentions as daily swarme in our printing house" (1.151–2), a product of "the paper warres in Paules Church-yard" (1.160–1). In the end, Ingenioso and his fellow satirists Furor and Phantasma must flee the law: "writts are out for me, to apprehend me for my playes, and now I am bound for the Ile of doggs" (5.2104–6), a reference to the notorious 1597 play by Jonson and Thomas Nashe that apparently satirized aristocratic persons and was immediately suppressed. For their parts, Philomusus and Studioso have abandoned their search for Parnassus and the goal of making their learning profitable in this fallen world; as Studioso says, bitterly, "Ban[ned] be that hill which learned witts adore, / Where earst we spent our stock and little store" (1.578–9).

The play stretches its allegorical framework to the breaking point through the introduction of direct references to the literary and dramatic world of the time. Ingenioso offers pithy critical judgments on many notable poets and playwrights, and toward the end of the play the famous actor-impresarios Richard Burbage and Will Kempe make an appearance, hoping to acquire Studioso and Philomusus as cheap playwrights and performers. Kempe remarks, in a passage that has attracted much critical attention,

Few of the university men pen plaies well, they smell too much of that writer Ouid ... Why heres our fellow Shakespeare puts them all downe, I and Ben Ionson too. O that Ben Ionson is a pestilent fellow, he brought vp Horace giuing the Poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath giuen him a purge that made him beray his credit. (4.1806–13)

Kempe refers to what later became known as the Poetomachia, a literary and dramatic brawl among Jonson, John Marston, Thomas Dekker, and perhaps others including Shakespeare, that captivated the stage for a few years as each side accused the other of barren wit and scurrilous invention. In Jonson's *Poetaster*, as Kempe recalls, Marston and Dekker (in the guise of minor Roman poets) are given an emetic by Horace (i.e., Jonson) that makes them vomit up their crude, affected vocabulary: "retrograde – reciprocal – incubus ... glibbery – lubrical – defunct ... Magnificate ... spurious – snotteries," and so on (Jonson 2009b; 5.3.427–42). Here the products of wit are worse than dregs: indigestible crudities incautiously gobbled up and spewed back at the world, a satirical repositioning of the circulation of witty property. Through such references, *The Second Return from Parnassus* uses wit not only to root itself in the contemporary moment, but also to identify itself as a potential player in the cultural and economic combats of the commercial theater, albeit an identification it ultimately rejects. Philomusus and Studioso pass the players' audition (by reciting speeches from *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Richard III*), but revolt at the idea of spending their wit upon the stage: "must the basest trade yeeld vs reliefe?" asks Philomusus (4.1886). In the end, they absurdly decide to become shepherds, abandoning the pursuit of learning or profit for an imaginary pastoral utopia.

As the shifting of wit in the Parnassus plays suggests, moving easily between different categories of thought and meaning is itself witty: the slipperiness of the concept of wit seems homologous with the slipperiness of wit. In Act 2 of Thomas Middleton's *No Wit, No Help like a Woman's*, Mistress Low-Water (the wit of the title, presently disguised as a gentleman) has just ingeniously betrothed herself to the aptly named Lady Goldenfleece. Desiring an entertainment for the wedding "To show our thankfulness to wit and fortune," she tells the servant Pickadile to "Run straight for one o'th'wits" (2.3.222–3), who replies by saying

I hold your best wits to be at ordinary, nothing so good in a tavern ... those that go to an ordinary dine better for twelve pence than he that goes to a tavern for his five shillings, and I think those have the best wits that can save four shillings, and fare better too. (2.3.229–35)

Low-Water observes that "all your wit then runs upon victuals," which earns the riposte "'Tis a sign 'twill hold out the longer then" (2.3.236–7). As "wit" shifts meaning – from craftiness to the crafting of plays, from witty invention to sound judgment (and a return to a kind of craftiness) – a social world is satirically sketched out, where playwrights and scholars congregate in public venues, waiting to gild the mercenary triumphs of the powerful while lacking the good sense to understand the meat-and-potatoes realities of their affected profession.

The economic valences of wit displayed here, as in the later Parnassus plays, are also visible across a range of witty plays in the period. To Fletcher's *Wit without Money*, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, we might add Middleton and Nicholas Rowley's *Wit at Several Weapons*, where Sir Perfidious begins the play by declaring "all that I have I ha' got by my wits" (1.1.9), explaining to his son that his wily discrimination allowed him to find appropriate female targets for rich lechers: "I knew how to match and make my market" (1.1.54). In *The Alchemist*, Face says of Doll's preparations to meet the fictive Spanish nobleman, "She must prepare perfumes, delicate linen, / The bath in chief, a banquet, and her wit" (3.2.20–1), defining wit within a series of personal adornments (and with a sexual implication discussed below). Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* has a metatheatrical induction in which the actors discuss the aristocrats they will be performing, describing one as "A servile hound, that loves the scent of forerunning fashion, like an empty hollow vault, still giving an echo to wit: greedily champing what any other well valued

judgment had beforehand chewed" (1.1.37–40). Thus the common business of theatrical playing serves as an ironic frame for elite performances of derivative wit. The close of this chapter discusses a similar point about *Love's Labour's Lost*, where aristocratic wit curiously connects to more mercantile practices.

The Matter of Wit

As a way of linking the varied realms of wit discussed to this point, from rhetorical questions to social communities to circulatory commodities, I employ the term "the matter of wit," relying on the multiple meanings of the term in the early modern context to frame the complexity of the matter at hand. "The matter of wit" is thus at once the *question* of wit, the *substance* of wit, the *situation* of wit, and the *quarrel* of wit, as well as the physical matter of wit, in both literal and metaphorical terms. It also incorporates what we might call, after Pierre Bourdieu (1993, 29–31), the *field* of wit. For Bourdieu a "field" is a structured space of engagement with its own rules, its own power relations, and its own stakes. Something like a market and something like a game, the field organizes and evaluates the actions of its participants who accumulate and exchange symbolic capital (and sometimes real capital) and who constantly reposition themselves in relation to the field, the structure of which changes with each new creation. Elements of such a field have been visible throughout this chapter, most clearly in the "literary fraternity" of the early seventeenth century that catalyzes the work of both Crane and O'Callaghan. One might also observe how the production of wit is periodically reoriented by external events that allow new witty practices to come to the fore. To trace briefly one set of linked events, the scandalous appearance of the Martin Marprelate tracts – pseudonymous, unlicensed attacks on Anglican churchmen and theology, written in a satirically witty voice – had a transformative effect on the courtly euphuisms of the University Wits, most of whom turned to writing anti-Martinist pamphlets filled with snarling invective and savage gibes (Black 2011; Hadfield 2009). These writings in turn helped spark the pamphlet war that erupted between Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe (both of whom had written anti-Martinist satires), where each accused the other of having indecorous, derivative wit. The Harvey–Nashe quarrel was itself one of the principal antecedents for the 1599 ban on satirical pamphlets by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, a sweeping act of censorship that some critics have argued forced satirists such as John Marston and Thomas Middleton to shift their energies to the theater, catalyzing the rise of theatrical satire in the early seventeenth century and setting the scene for the Poetomachia (Boose 1994). Through this historical progression we can see the matter of wit as an evolving field of battle, where different internal and external events work as structuring devices across time as new agents join the field and new issues dominate the action.

Every action taken within a field involves what Bourdieu calls a "position-taking" (1993, 30), an occupying of a particular position within the field in order to defend or improve one's store of capital; delimited and oriented by the network of relations that structures the field, each position-taking is "defined in relation to the *space of possibles* which is objectively realized as a *problematic*." The Ciceronian "theory of imitation" that Crane discusses might thus be better understood as a problematic of imitation, revolving around questions of identity, ownership, and cultural circulation: the successful performance of wit is intended as a manifestation of one's inherent *ingenium*, yet in a world where wit traffics as a commodity and is easily appropriable, performance is necessarily divisible from natural talent. As the Parnassus Plays make clear, wit is specifically

associated with base matter when it is borrowed, stolen, or sold: the rhetoric of materiality signals the process of appropriation. Examples of this rhetorical materiality abound in the period; to those discussed above we might add Jacques's initial verdict on Touchstone in *As You Like It* – "in his brain ... he hath strange places cramm'd / With observation, the which he vents / In mangled forms" (2.7.38–42), with "vents" carrying the double meaning of speaking and selling. Consider also Antony's verdict on Lepidus in *Julius Caesar*: "one that feeds / On objects, arts and imitations, / Which, out of use and staled by other men, / Begin his fashion" (5.2.36–9). By the early seventeenth century there resounds a veritable chorus of such attacks, which reach their apogee and perfection in the works of Ben Jonson, inventor of the word "plagiary" (Donaldson 2003, 123). Jonson's earliest play, *Every Man in His Humour*, features the poet-thief Matthew, of whom Edward Knowell remarks, "I'll have him free of the wit-brokers, for he utters nothing but stolen remnants" (4.1.71–2), and similar figures crowd the plays of the early seventeenth century. By insisting on the impropriety of uttering "remnants," this pervasive critique reinforces the intellectual property rights of the producer of wit in a cultural context governed by appropriation and renovation.

Or, to turn it around the other way, attacks on the merchandizing of stolen wit serve to insulate true wit from the imperatives of the marketplace. In the induction to Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, one actor, speaking as a judicious spectator, desires

your poets would leave to be promoters of other men's jests, and to waylay all the stale apothegms, or old books they can hear of, to farce their scenes withal. That they would not so penuriously glean wit from every laundress or hackney-man; or derive their best grace, with servile imitation, from common stages, or observation of the company they converse with; as if their invention lived wholly upon another man's trencher. (Ind.159–66)

Jonson preserves his own play from the stigma of such illicit borrowings by virtue of having made the charge.

The critic whose work is most closely aligned with a matterly sense of wit, albeit in somewhat different terms, is Adam Zucker, whose *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy* explores the rise of wit as a compensatory response to the social fluidity caused by market relations. As Zucker puts it, "With each sale, an individual altered his or her position within the increasingly complex, and increasingly interdependent, social, cultural, and financial economies of the city. In short, commerce in the Tudor and Stuart period permeated everyday relationships across the social spectrum to an extent that was previously unthinkable" (2011, 12). Theatrical wit thus plays out as a practice of discrimination and taste, through which the truly witty employ materials and locations at hand to demonstrate their social superiority and capitalize on their cultural status. Zucker's signal example is from Jonson's *Epicoene*, where he contrasts the magpie faux-scholar Jack Daw, who spouts fragments of literary works without understanding their meaning, with Truewit, who extemporaneously rewrites a famous satire of Juvenal, localizing its examples to contemporary London. As Zucker remarks, "Instead of blindly accumulating and randomly displaying signs of sophistication, Truewit has an active relationship to them: he reworks knowledge for his own ends and, in doing so, sets himself apart from those who lack his rhetorical skill" (2011, 5). At the same time, the ease with which Truewit repositions Juvenal demonstrates a facility with language that matches his urbane knowledge of the city. Put simply, wit requires (and illustrates) competence, across a range of fields: rhetorical, literary, cultural, social, and urban, among others. Counterpointing Jonson with Shakespeare (via *The Merry Wives of*

Windsor) and the Caroline playwrights Brome and Shirley, Zucker traces the development of such witty competence from homespun “domestic ... practicality” to urban “ingenuity and tastefulness” to elite “cultural fluency” (9).

“Wit is never the sole preserve of the wealthy,” Zucker notes, “and it permits status to accrue with groups or individuals – women, servants, the untitled or unmoneyed – normally distant from centers of economic or political control” (10–11). In *Epicene*, the three witty gallants must also contend with “the Collegiates,” a female club that has declared itself arbiter of wit in the Town: according to Truewit, they “give entertainment to all the Wits and Braveries o’ the time, as they call ‘em: cry down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine or rather hermaphroditical authority, and every day gain to their college some new probationer” (1.1.69–74). The Ladies Collegiate offers a perfect illustration of the operation of the field of witty production inside the play: the Collegiates both provide an arena in which wit may be judged and secure their own position in the field as those who render judgment. In another register, it also perfectly illustrates the operation of the field of wit outside the play, in that the Collegiates’ claims to judicious wit are ultimately shown to be false. By using his play to attack and correct the falseness of female wit, Jonson reinforces his own position as an adjudicator and defender of true wit: dismantling the usurped authority of his female characters helps solidify his own. One might say more broadly that, as a category, female wit exists in order to reinforce the idea of male wit, which has no identifiable qualities of its own: all the qualities of wit that might threaten masculinity, such as garrulity, promiscuity, frivolity, and lack of decorum, are gendered as feminine. The idea of female wit as something absolutely separate from male wit is pervasive in the period; proverbs like “A woman’s wit helps in a pinch” are recapitulated in play titles (*No Wit, No Help like a Woman’s*) and inform a wide range of representations of witty women (see Brown 2003).

An even sharper connection between wit and gender comes from the fact that a contemporary meaning of “wit” is “genitalia,” either male or female. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Don Pedro’s invented conversation with Beatrice about Benedick thus mocks more than his ingenuity: “I said thou hadst a fine wit. ‘True,’ said she, ‘a fine little one.’ ‘No,’ said I, ‘a great wit.’ ‘Right,’ says she, ‘a great gross one.’ ‘Nay,’ said I, ‘a good wit.’ ‘Just,’ said she, ‘it hurts nobody’” (5.1.157–61). (See also Doll’s preparations in *The Alchemist*, quoted above, or Sir Epicure Mammon’s question about Doll, “Is she no way accessible? no means, / No trick to give a man a taste of her – wit –/ Or so?” (2.3.262–4).) Thus Rosalind’s comments on the uncontrollability of “a woman’s wit” in *As You Like It* carry an explicit erotic dimension, reinforcing the sexual anxieties at the root of the conversation, which culminates in discovering “your wife’s wit going to your neighbor’s bed” (4.1.155). A woman’s wit is thus both her imaginative faculty and her sexual organs; just as her body cannot be confined, so her wit is that which escapes control.

Complicating this moment in *As You Like It* is the complex ventriloquism that frames it, as a woman plays a man playing a woman. Much as the title character of *No Wit, No Help like a Woman’s* demonstrates the singular help of a woman’s wit while disguised as a man, Rosalind’s witty discourse of women’s wit is socially appropriate because it is performed under the aegis of Ganymede. Furthermore, Rosalind may be celebrating women’s wit for its inventiveness and quickness, but Ganymede is ostensibly performing women’s wit in an attempt to cure Orlando of his amorous subjugation to Rosalind. This is certainly the way that Celia understands the conversation, complaining afterwards to Rosalind, “You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate. We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head, and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest” (4.1.172–4). Of course, any performance of female wit

upon the early modern stage is an act of ventriloquism, as carrying out Celia's threat would reveal; a theater without women facilitates a double framing of female wit in terms of both celebration and criticism. This is certainly true of *Much Ado about Nothing*, where Beatrice's wit is at once the comic heart of the play and that which must ultimately be contained and resolved; as has often been noted, her final quips in the play are interrupted by the explicit insertion of Benedick's tongue: "Peace! I will stop your mouth" (5.4.97; see also McCollum 1968).

Conclusions

The key point about wit for Zucker is its *materiality* – that is, its groundedness in real social and economic relations: "To be witty, or clever, or tasteful ... is not simply to speak or act well but to exist in a privileged relation to the spaces and materials of a given environment," a relation often mystified and obscured by the presentation of true wit as spontaneous, unlabored, and untaught (Zucker 2011, 3). This point is inarguable in the context of Jonson, where unaffected courtesy, tasteful discrimination, and witty expression mutually reinforce practices of social competence, but it may frame early modern wit somewhat too narrowly in terms of the *mastery* of a discourse, a situation, a physical space. We might think in this context of the distinction Michel de Certeau makes between "strategical" and "tactical" social practices (1984, xix): strategies are dominant practices that operate by demarcating a space as the proper location for their actions; tactics, by contrast, must operate in a space that is not their own, using whatever materials are at hand in novel and unauthorized ways. "Because it does not have a place," de Certeau observes, "a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing.' Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities.'" While it is certainly possible for wit to be strategic in these terms – it would perhaps be fair to say that Jonsonian wit strives for nothing less than the kind of domination described by de Certeau – it is more common for wit to operate tactically and opportunistically, playing with things that are not its own. Iago's comment to Roderigo, "We work by wit, not by witchcraft, / And wit depends on dilatory time," illustrates de Certeau's opposition by counterpointing a brute power to reshape the world and a weak force that must improvise a response to dominant conditions. "Dilatory time," Iago's witty phrase, implies dilation as well as delay or slowness: wit depends upon "dilatory time" because it involves seeing openings, recognizing the kairotic moment at which, with the right thrust, with the right words, the correct behavior, the world can be changed.

Theater, of course, is all about such moments, or at least the *idea* of such moments, since it stages improvisation without typically relying on improvisation. Audiences have spent centuries marveling at Iago's uncanny ability to destroy Othello's world through a few opportune words, but the sequence of events is inexorably scripted. Indeed, theater that does depend directly on improvisation (clowning, commedia dell'arte, performance art, theater games) is typically sequestered from normative theater, sometimes with disapprobation, as evidenced by Hamlet's attacks on clowns who speak more than is set down for them. Hamlet's own improvisatory sallies, on the other hand, are at points rendered material in another sense. In response to Polonius' question about his reading material, "What is the matter, my lord?" Hamlet replies, "Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit" (2.2.193, 196–9). Of course, we understand that Hamlet is himself the "satirical rogue,"

and the material book acts as a mere prop, something he pretends to read from while improvising his attacks on the old man. Performance is thus opposed to physical matter and yet dependent upon it, since the presence of the book catalyzes the whole scene. Thus when we laugh at Hamlet's gulling of Polonius, our celebration of the quick-witted ripostes in the theatrical now – an immediate, transformative inspiration – is strangely undergirded by the reality of repetition and reproduction, the same joke always appearing at the same temporal moment, the fact of the theatrical artifact. Zucker's insistence on the materiality of wit within dramatic *representation* might thus be profitably extended to the materiality of wit in theatrical *performance*, where the brilliant flash of wit is always supplemented by the circulatory implications of witty commodities, both prior to and following the theatrical event.

Love's Labour's Lost offers a complex demonstration of the materiality of theatrical wit, especially through the ambiguous figure of the Spanish braggart Don Armado, "a man of fire-new words, fashion's own knight," whom the king intends to use "for my minstrelsy" (1.1.176, 174). At first glance, this would seem to set up an opposition between competent and incompetent wit much like that between Truewit and Jack Daw in *Epicoene*, especially since Armado is also a purloiner of wit; watching Armado and the pedant Holofernes amuse and vie with each other in preposterous terms, Mote comments to Costard, "They have been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps" (5.1.34–5). Certainly both Holofernes and Armado are put in their place during the comic debacle of the *Masque of the Nine Worthies*, as the lords and ladies all fire witty volleys in their direction.

At the same time, the play's persistent criticizing and ridiculing of the ostensible truewits problematizes any simple division along lines of competence. The *Masque of the Nine Worthies*, for example, is preceded by the lords' abortive attempt to woo the ladies in the guise of wandering, dancing Russians – a deeply embarrassing theatrical catastrophe, precipitated by the French courtier Boyet having told the ladies of the lords' plan. Discovering this, Biron attacks Boyet, as one who "pecks up wit as pigeons peas, / And utters it again when God doth please. / He is wit's pedlar, and retails his wares / At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs" (5.2.315–18). His language clearly parallels Armado's scrap-stealing and connects to the broader social critique of wit as appropriate commodity. Yet the crucial difference between Boyet and Armado is that here Biron feels at a disadvantage: "And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know, / Have not the grace to grace it with such show" (5.2.319–20). Biron is a great producer of wit, but as "gross" implies, he lacks the retailing perfection demonstrated by Boyet. Boyet triumphs over the ostensible truewits, it would seem, because he is literally and structurally a go-between: a "mumble-news," as Biron also calls him (5.2.464), who traffics in legitimate and illegitimate information between the masculine and feminine camps of the play. Biron calls Boyet "the ape of form" (5.2.325), but he is openly such – unlike Armado and Holofernes, who disguise or misrecognize their own cultural position.

Wit operates as the medium of exchange for the play: it is virtually all that the characters traffic in. But wit is also the medium of the play itself, the rhetorical density and obtrusive rhymes and overwrought composition that continually draw attention. Throughout the play, improvisation is lauded and rote memorization is deplored – "O, never will I trust to speeches penned" is the first line of Biron's verses disclaiming artifice (5.2.402) – yet the palpable artificiality of the play continually reminds us that its verbal brilliance is indeed speeches penned; we are rarely allowed to forget the memorized script that stands behind the witty improvisation. In this regard, we might connect Boyet, the consummate medium, to an intermediary figure directly relevant to Shakespeare: the actor, who is the ape of form by profession, and who takes the wit of others into his body and brings it forth again with greater grace. If Boyet is a figure for the actor, Biron becomes a figure for

the playwright, the gross source of wit, ironically observing the ongoing and increasing prosperity of his creations in the mouths of others. The play thus shows a special interest in theater as a peculiarly mediated form of art, one in which the prosperity of the jest lies in the audience's willingness to misrecognize the prior conning of witty material.

The matter of wit resembles a market that denies that it is a market; the price of entry is to disavow the commodity status of wit. *Love's Labour's Lost* allies itself with this economy of wit to a degree, through its satirical portraits of the braggart and the pedant, both men of complements who ineptly steal and ineptly deploy wit and learning. However, the play refuses to occupy the position of privilege that this position-taking is designed to open up, where it can increase its cultural capital through a mystification of market imperatives. Instead, we have Biron's self-description as one who sells wit by the gross, acknowledging his place within the market system. The play sardonically places the laurel of wit on the brows of "'honey-tongued' Boyet" (5.2.334), a character seemingly invented to blur any sharp line between the creation and theft of wit, threatening the symbolic economy that dominates the field of witty production. In this way, *Love's Labour's Lost* both comprehends the matter of wit and critiques it, staking out novel territory through a witty eluding of demarcation.

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Materialisms

Elizabeth Williamson

Was that voice ourselves? Scraps, orts and fragments, are we, also, that?

Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*

The exhibition card attached to a human skull in the Horace Howard Furness Memorial Library explains that this object once belonged to a licensed pharmacist, “who had loaned it to many actors playing at the Walnut Street Theatre.” By way of proof, the signatures of some of the men who used the skull as a property when playing Hamlet are still visible on the cranium, making it a material artifact of those ephemeral performances (Traister 2000, 76). Things like this prop skull – three-dimensional objects that cannot otherwise be catalogued as a printed book, manuscript, or image – are referred to by archivists as “realia,” a term that evokes the desire to anchor historical research in an object that exists outside language and interpretation. But what does it mean to say that the skull is somehow more real than the text of *Hamlet* (1601)? The notion of a material object’s relationship to reality derives from a set of philosophical and cultural histories that need to be acknowledged. From Platonic and Aristotelian theories of matter, to Christianity’s conflicted relationship with earthly, corrupted flesh, to what David Hawkes provocatively calls the “colonization of the human by the natural sciences” (2011, 251), we cannot take matter for granted. To do so would be to ignore, among other things, the material realities governing our own scholarly production.

For the purposes of this chapter, the term “materiality” points both to objects like the Furness skull, which exist in a particular time and space, and to a set of literary critical approaches that emerged in the the 1990s and early 2000s, influenced by Marxist theory but also by anthropologists working in the tradition of Clifford Geertz. Jonathan Gil Harris points out that “cultural materialism,” the name for the school of Marxist criticism that began in Great Britain in the 1980s, is the “chiastic double” of material culture studies, but that the two approaches point in very different directions: “Cultural materialism, in its wish for social change, is ostensibly future oriented; studies of material culture, by contrast, are often fueled by an antiquarian desire to

recover and preserve the past as it 'really' was" (2009, 5). This focus on objects was originally designed to complement the focus on subjects that characterized the new historical scholarship of the 1980s. What makes this kind of criticism potentially valuable in a scholarly marketplace dominated by our colleagues in the sciences is also what makes it most challenging – namely, the project of accurately reconstructing early modern culture from its residual traces.

The seductiveness of uncovering the life histories of material artifacts is exemplified in Stephen Greenblatt's (1990) tale of a "round red priest's" hat he claims was Cardinal Wolsey's. The hat was lost to history after the Reformation, but was eventually given to Christ Church, Oxford by an eighteenth-century theater company. For Greenblatt, the company's appropriation of the cardinal's clothing, or part of it, represents an important theatrical innovation. By imagining the actors' efforts to translate the object to the stage without bringing religion itself into the theater, Greenblatt provides a persuasive alternative to straightforward narratives of secularization. As it turns out, however, the object's theatrical history was somewhat different from Greenblatt's account of it. According to its exhibition card, the hat belonged at one time to Horace Walpole and was purchased in 1842 by the actor Charles Kean, who used it repeatedly in productions of *Henry VIII* (Lee 1995). The hat thus has something to tell us about English theater, but not necessarily about early modern theater. Like the piece of Shakespeare's hair currently housed in the Folger Library, the hat promises us a kind of magical, synchronic access to the past but offers instead a more nuanced, diachronic history (Harris 2001).

One solution to the pitfalls involved in tracking down the provenance of individual artifacts is to eschew objectivity in favor of historiography, an approach exemplified in Lynda Boose's (1991) essay on the scold's bridle and the cucking stool. Boose explores the links between early modern and modern ideologies, applying material culture research to her reading of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592) and tracing patterns of gendered erasure that begin in the sixteenth century. Because scold's bridles are rarely mentioned in contemporary court records and were thus ignored by twentieth-century historians, Boose turns to the work of antiquarian T. N. Brushfield, using the catalogue of artifacts he found in Cheshire in the 1850s to contextualize the taming practices represented in Shakespeare's play. Brushfield's attitude toward the objects he discovered is at once assiduous – each verbal description is accompanied by detailed drawings – and breezy, unconsciously replicating his own biases by failing to point out that he was dealing with a device that had been used to torture women as late as the 1830s. This oversight allows Boose to give a certain agency back to the object, or rather to the kind of readings that "insist upon invading privileged literary fictions with the realities that defined the lives of sixteenth century shrews" (1991, 181). In this sense her analysis elides problems of documentation by dematerializing the object, turning it into a "signifier" that can be used to point to suppressed histories (197). The question, Boose implies, is not what gets buried and how we can dig it up, but how the thing came to be buried in the first place, and by whom.

Although their approaches differ, Boose and Greenblatt would likely agree that material culture studies must consider the symbolic weight of objects such as the skull, the Cardinal's hat, and the scold's bridle, as well as the status of seemingly ordinary commodities like food or clothing. Accordingly, subsequent generations of scholars have sought to avoid reinscribing a binary division between objects that matter and objects that do not. Nor are they unaware of the fact that detail-oriented archival labor has the potential not just to fetishize the thing being studied, but to obscure the particular value of literary criticism. If what we are doing is uncovering the trajectories of objects four hundred years old, how can we distinguish ourselves from scientists or historians, who in many cases are better equipped for this kind of work? Materialist

critics, therefore, are becoming increasingly adept at striking a balance between examining the content of play-scripts and their form, attending to the subjective experience of early modern audiences while continually working to bring new objects of study into our collective field of vision. This chapter considers several key features of early modern English culture that affected the relationship between subjects and objects, before moving on to discuss some new directions in the study of early modern drama that trouble the boundary between these two categories.

History of the Book

In some ways it is most natural for scholars of literature to examine the materiality of books themselves. Books are both the tools we use to understand the past and the medium with which we communicate our findings. They are the “stuff” that we work with in order to understand better the conditions of dramatic production and reception, but our understanding is delimited by the vagaries of history that have selectively preserved these artifacts. Furness, quoting Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale* (1610), describes himself as a “snapper-up of unconsider'd trifles,” a phrase which deliberately obscures the choices he and other antiquarians made in selecting objects for the collections we now depend on (4.3.26).¹ Our study of these “trifles” also depends on our access to libraries and archives – that is, our capacity to acquire grant funding and/or professional leave from our home institutions. In many ways, Early English Books Online has revolutionized the field by giving a large number of researchers access to digitized copies of early modern books, but the database also has its limitations. Most texts, for instance, are available only in a single edition, and in general only a single copy of each edition has been scanned. One productive approach to these constraints has been to embrace them under the banner of “Digital Humanities,” which invites the investigation of new ways of reading, teaching, and doing criticism in the age of the database and the internet. Jonathan Hope and Michael Witmore, for example, have been rethinking dramatic genres by using a computer program designed to analyze systematically rhetorical effects by tracing word patterns. Their aim is to standardize the process of investigating “the operations of language,” allowing them to augment their own limited energies and thus to return “to the texts themselves with renewed interest and questions” (2010, 360–1).

Studying the implications of book digitization is the natural endpoint of the branch of material culture studies that addresses the history of the book. Printed books have the advantage of providing information about the reading habits of a wide range of consumers, but important information about the material culture of early modern England has been gleaned from broadsides and graffiti as well as from handwritten inventories, letters, and court records. As for the plays themselves, most were printed in cheap quarto editions purchased as records of individual performances, and therefore were not consistently preserved. The editions that do survive teach us that the authority of such texts was anchored in the reputation of the playing companies, not the individual author, since the former are consistently listed in much larger typeface on the title page, while the playwright is sometimes not mentioned at all. Until the publication of Ben Jonson's folio in 1616, plays were not thought of as literature or treated as such, and it is only because John Heminges and Henry Condell followed Jonson's example and collected all of Shakespeare's plays into a single folio volume that modern readers now experience his work as a unified canon. Nor were Shakespeare and Jonson alone in being memorialized in this way.

Folio editions of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher testify to the massive popularity of these playwrights, whose output rivaled Shakespeare's own.²

For the most part, we rely upon these printed editions, although as Grace Ioppolo argues in Chapter 38 of this volume, autograph and scribal manuscripts deserve closer and more rigorous attention. Due to the expense of copying out such manuscripts by hand, actors would have been given individualized scrolls of paper, including only that player's speeches and the cue-words given by his fellow performers (Bruster 2007, 42). In other words, it is important to understand that the way we read the plays was not the way they were memorized and performed, and that the materiality of these working documents challenges our notion of the plays as fully formed works produced by a single author in a single temporal moment. Nor should we overestimate the importance of the printed versions of play-scripts. Given the uneven nature of sales, a single performance at one of the large public theaters could reliably reach more people than the rather small print run of the same play; standing-room admission was far more affordable than even an inexpensive quarto edition of the script (Lin 2012, 13).

Attention to the material conditions of early modern manuscripts and printed books represents a significant departure from nineteenth- and twentieth-century textual criticism, which was assiduous in attending to the differences between quarto and folio editions but otherwise treated them as transparent windows into authorial intention. History of the book scholarship, by contrast, studies the *minutiae* of play-scripts – size, print run, paper and ink quality, cost, marginalia, and other material factors – and interacts more skeptically with the question of literary meaning. As Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass suggest, these elements of the text's materiality demand to be “looked *at*, not seen *through*” (1993, 257). Further, the authors suggest that attention to such details, including the historical contingency of texts such as the 1623 Folio, will help us resist our own desire for a coherent, intelligible text.

Picking up on de Grazia and Stallybrass' invitation, Jonathan Walker has recently examined manuscripts of Anthony Munday's *John a Kent and John a Cumber* and the anonymous *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore*. Walker's argument takes into account not only the original condition of the manuscript, but, in the case of the Munday play, the subsequent degradation of one of its leaves, which frustrates the reader's attempt to access the play's comic resolution. This object, Walker writes, “represents [the play's] dramatic action in a unique physical state, which challenges the reader to take account of the material text in ways that would be easier to disregard or trivialize had the final leaf never been torn” (2013, 212). Intriguingly, Walker spends much of his essay exploring the experience of reading, rather than attempting to use the manuscript to reconstruct the experience of seeing a performance of the play.

Walker's focus on reading is echoed in Claire M. L. Bourne's study of the use of pilcrow – a symbol designating the start of a paragraph or other section of text – in printed play-scripts. These typographical markings, she suggests, “offered the early makers of English playbooks a material-textual means by which to organize the play-reading experience around the peculiarities and conventions of dramatic form” (2014, 452). Bourne makes the claim that pilcrows were used to clarify and segment the reading experience, from identifying speech units to separating the play into acts, thus laying the foundation for the way we now encounter early modern plays. Walker, who relies heavily on the use of technical literary terminology in addition to the materiality of the text, asserts that scholars can benefit from moving more “promiscuously” between textual information, bibliographic studies such as Bourne's, and material culture studies (2013, 232). Such analyses might be facilitated by regular collaboration with archivists and librarians, who are more intimately acquainted with the materiality of the books they preserve.

Global Trade and Labor

Walker's essay provides an innovative solution to the problem of accessing the "original" material object by pointing out the histories of destruction and reconstruction that affect our relationships with fragile early modern texts. Another successful approach to this dilemma has been to focus on "histories of production, ownership and exchange that constitute objects' trajectories through time and space"; this angle analyzes diachronic trends in circulation rather than attempting to pin down a single synchronic moment of production (Harris and Korda 2002, 7). Through such studies, we have learned that the material that sustained the lives of early modern English people was largely homegrown. The economics of production were gradually shifting – from guild labor to wage labor, and from domestic to international exchange networks – but in the early modern period the trade in importing goods from the Mediterranean, Asia, and the Americas was just starting to build up steam, and these goods were mainly luxury items that ordinary people could not afford.

The Shoemaker's Holiday (1599) captures a crucial turning point in the intersecting histories of early modern trade and early modern labor. Dekker's play valorizes the quintessentially manly, prototypically English nature of artisanal work, but its protagonist is an aristocrat who is merely pretending to be a shoemaker, while his beloved, for her part, is kept well away from the sphere of exchange. Moreover, the master of the guild makes most of his money not by selling shoes but by acquiring the contents of a merchant ship, including exotic items such as almonds and civet that prop up but never appear within the fiction. In other words, the play purports to celebrate a form of nonalienated, egalitarian labor, while promoting the fantasy that exceptional individuals can grow rich through new forms of globalized accumulation (Howard 2003).

The brief florescence of *wunderkammer*, or wonder cabinets, provides us with another category of objects that existed outside the sphere of commercial exchange, but likewise represent a fantasy of expansion and renewal. The things that populated early modern *wunderkammer* were collected almost haphazardly by travelers and traders, then brought back to Europe and "catalogued" by placing them next to one another in display cabinets. This practice allowed those who had never left their homes to experience the world from their living spaces. It also worked to consolidate European power over foreign regions by asserting and thereby producing a certain kind of knowledge about the goods associated with such regions (Mullaney 1983). Although there is no direct connection between the wonder cabinet and the natural history museum – which relies on a much more systematic approach to the production of knowledge – both play an important role in the ongoing history of colonialism.

Contact between European and non-European cultures often took the form of trade, but what linked various forms of object circulation – gifting, trade, and outright theft – was a lack of a shared understanding about the value of objects. As William Pietz has shown, the term "fetish," which Marx employs in his powerful account of the mystified nature of the commodity, derives from contact between Portuguese traders and the tribal peoples living on the west coast of Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. "It was Portuguese merchants," Pietz writes, "who first conceptualized the *fetisso* as the mark of Africans' supposed irrational propensity to personify material objects," thereby creating the proof they were looking for that their trading partners, future colonial subjects, were not quite human (1987, 23). This racialized understanding of the fetish is most visible in Thomas Rymer's "A Short View of Tragedy" (1693), which accuses Othello of a "barbarous" obsession with the status of a mere handkerchief. "Had it been Desdemona's Garter," Rymer reasons, "the Sagacious Moor might have smelt a Rat: but the

Handkerchief is so remote a trifle no Booby on this side Mauritania cou'd make any consequence from it" ([1693] 1974, 51). According to the play's title page, Othello is "the Moore of Venice," but for Rymer Othello's behavior is understandable only if he comes from the *other* side of Mauritania. By the late seventeenth century, Europeans had come to understand "savage" people as subhuman others who routinely conflated people with things.

On the contrary, it was Europeans' willingness to treat people as things that facilitated the transatlantic slave trade. But actual objects were a part of this equation, too, as demonstrated by the case history of sugar, whose market value was inflated due to the coerced labor that produced it. Sugar also helped create the subject position "wife" within an emerging European capitalist economy; in this role, the job of white women was to be frugal and yet productive with luxury goods such as sugar. Early modern cookbooks were full of references to exotic commodities such as spices and nuts, but sugar had a particularly visible presence in early modern culture. As an easily transportable commodity, it functioned almost like money; it also transformed the nature of the aristocratic banquet, giving rise to specific "rituals of status" surrounding the consumption of decorative sugar desserts (Hall 1996, 172). And so this single commodity provides a surprising link between enslaved subjects whose labor harvested the sugar and subjected women who turned it into edible confections. Marx failed to explore slave labor as a production of surplus value in any significant way, but this is precisely the kind of fetishism he describes in *Capital*: through commodification we lose sight of the human labor that has produced the object, and eventually we lose sight of human beings altogether.

Suggesting that perhaps the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction, some critics have recently begun to argue that a focus on the role of alienated labor in commodity production has in fact caused us to pay too much attention to ourselves. Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*, a philosophical intervention geared toward the contemporary moment of ecological crisis, has been particularly influential in this regard. By suggesting that things such as "edibles, commodities, storms, metals" can be seen as "quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own," she posits an alternative ideology that she hopes might affect our political choices (2010, viii). Bennett's eco-philosophy offers a new kind of affect theory, but one that is not limited to human bodies. Rather, Bennett draws on Bruno Latour's notion of the actant, a concept that decouples agency from personhood.³

An examination of Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) reveals that this decentering of the human may not have been as foreign to early moderns as it is to us. As Jay Zysk argues, Ursula – whose name links her to the carnivorous creatures who played a prominent role in early modern entertainments – "evinces the ontological and physiological interdependence of human and animal" (2012, 71). Because of her physical enormity and outsized personality, Ursula draws continual taunts from the men who visit her booth, but despite being threatened with the "cucking-stool" the only harm she suffers is when she burns her own leg with a hot frying pan (Jonson [1614] 1966; 2.5.107). This injury presents another connection between pig and woman, as Ursula becomes the agent of cooking her own flesh. It can also be read as a distinctly comic "taming" of her notoriously powerful tongue, which, Circe-like, turns everyone around her into animals: hedge-bird, dog's head, playhouse poultry, polecat, vermin, weasel, grasshopper.

In her research on household materiality, Patricia Fumerton points out that early modern cookbooks called for animals to be tortured prior to consumption in order to render their flesh more delicious (Fumerton and Hunt 1999, 1). But the act of pounding live flesh also affected those doing the pounding, as audiences learn by listening to Ursula describe the consequences of laboring in a hot booth: "I am all fire and fat," she complains, "I shall e'en melt away" (*Bartholomew*

Fair, 2.2.48). The pig-woman contains multitudes and expels them, dripping, through her living skin. An inveterate consumer as well as a savvy saleswoman, Ursula is prevented from wholesale disintegration by drinking ale and smoking tobacco. Perhaps her favorite pastime, however, and the one her tapster Mooncalf claims she “battens” on, is the exchange of vapors (2.3.35). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the sense implied here is that of a “fancy or fantastic idea; a foolish brag or boast” (“vapor,” n. 4), but the word also evokes a particular kind of “exhalation” (n. 1) whereby matter becomes insubstantial due to the application of heat. Ursula trades these exhalations lovingly with the horse-courser Knockem, and aggressively with Quarlous and Nightingale, whose misogynistic taunts she returns with a vengeance. It is this battle, ultimately, that causes Ursula to retreat with a scalded leg, but not before she has told Quarlous to “Go snuff after your brother’s bitch, Mistress Commodity” (2.5.116). The line is ironic, given Ursula’s unscrupulous attitude toward making money any way she can, but it also turns a critical eye on her abusers. We are all animals in our appetites, the play suggests. Through this and other scenes *Bartholomew Fair*, unlike *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, presents an unflinching portrait of the interdependent patterns of labor, consumption, and material transformation that governed early modern subjects’ relationship with their fellow animals, human and otherwise.

Religious Objects and Theatrical Trifles

In addition to the emergence of a market economy – increasingly fueled by colonialism and international trade – the other major factor affecting the circulation of English commodities was the Protestant Reformation, which began with Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. Following the example of Martin Luther’s attack on Catholic indulgencies, English reformers set about tearing down the trappings of traditional worship such as crucifixes and rosary beads and replacing them with prayer books and bibles. It was blasphemous, they asserted, to deck statues in rich costumes when the poor went naked; it was even worse to wave around a wafer and to claim that it was God. But like Henry, who strategically reappropriated the lands and goods he confiscated from the monks, there were many individuals who profited from the resale of church furnishings. While the more expensive pieces of metal and cloth were sold off, other objects were put to new uses in order to emphasize their lack of sacrality – one altar stone in East Newlyn, for instance, was turned into a cheese press (Whiting 1989, 74). Meanwhile, many confiscated church vestments found their way into the theater, providing the impetus for Greenblatt’s hypothesis about Wolsey’s hat. The theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe was also a pawnbroker, and items from private closets frequently appeared in his inventory of theatrical properties used by the Admiral’s Men (Korda 1996). Clothes and other household linens were expensive, but also highly durable, which allowed them to function as a kind of currency in a world in which banking as we know it did not yet exist (Jones and Stallybrass 2000, 26–32; see also Amanda Bailey’s chapter 8 in this volume).

Because the stage properties used in public theater performances were less expensive than the costumes, their circulation is unfortunately not well documented. What we have instead are inventories kept by the Office of the Revels, which catalogue the more luxurious items used to produce theatrical performances at Court. We also have the Records of Early English Drama (REED) volumes, which include inventories and financial accounts related to the production of parish drama. REED documents mention cheap materials such as “pawper mache,” and small but remarkable items such as “a newe sudere [handkerchief] for god.” They also describe more

expensive processes, such as an entry from Coventry that includes the payment of 2s. 6d. to “Hewyt” for “paynting & gylldying the fawchyne, the pillar, the crose & Godes cote” (Ingram 1981, 239). These records provide information about the business of making properties for a dramatic enterprise that was nearly contemporaneous with the public theater, while simultaneously revealing the proximity of church goods to players’ goods.

Though early modern stage properties lacked significant monetary value, they played a crucial role within theatrical fictions that examine both the cultural status of objects and the theological dimensions of materiality. The protagonist in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (1592), for example, is a scholar whose willingness to risk damnation hinges on his affection for the material world. A committed empiricist, Faustus scoffs at the existence of hell while using magic to study the cosmos and to transport himself around the globe. His books – one crucial set of stage properties – are his prize possession, but he values them mainly because they provide him with access to more ephemeral forms of pleasure:

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander’s love and Oenon’s death?
And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp
Made music with my Mephistophilis?

(Marlowe [1604] 2.3.26–30)⁴

Like many of Faustus’ adventures, his Homeric concert happens offstage, but it is worth noting that music was a key element of public theater performances. Faustus repeatedly promises the emperor that the spirits he conjures are the “true substantial bodies” of Alexander the Great and his mistress, but what the audience saw were familiar actors in a new set of costumes ([1604] 4.1.46, 68). In other words, through Faustus’ experiments with magic the play highlights the unique qualities of an art form that anchors its pleasing falsehoods in a set of versatile human bodies – and the material objects they carried on stage with them.

By the end of the play, however, the script’s light-hearted self-consciousness gives way to a more charged set of theological problems, as Faustus’ conjurations are shown to be not only insubstantial, but also hazardous to his bodily integrity. The play’s most spectacular piece of stage business features a “throne” that “descends” from above, as the Good Angel gives Faustus tangible evidence of what heaven looks like ([1616] 5.2.77 sd). Here, in order for the drama to work, the audience must imagine that this is not an ordinary chair painted gold, yet this stage spectacle also alludes to the fact that corrupted human beings cannot fully grasp the nature of heaven and hell until the moment of the body’s death. Only once his damnation is confirmed does Faustus see how Christ’s blood “streams in the firmament” and look upon the wrathful face of God ([1604] 5.2.71). One lesson early modern playgoers might have gleaned from Faustus’ tragedy is that incarnated materiality, however contested, was the only form of matter that could be completely relied upon. Because he would not put his faith in something he could not prove, Faustus traded fleeting pleasure for a series of eternal torments – one of which, according to Mephistophilis, is the all-too-substantial antithesis of the heavenly throne, an “ever-burning chair . . . / for o’er tortured souls to rest them in” ([1616] 5.2.93). Other possible readings of the play, however, intersect with more secular concerns. For example, it can be argued that Faustus’ worldly appetites provide a kind of allegory of international trade, in which money allows human beings and their commodities to transcend seemingly fixed geographical barriers. This emergent

globalization was also fueled by the creation of various forms of debt and credit, a practice that Marlowe's contemporaries knew as usury and which was becoming increasingly central to the lives of early modern Europeans.

If the theater provided one place where materiality – including the highly charged nature of Christ's embodiment – could be examined, its own physical conditions were themselves a site of contestation. Protestant antitheatricalists argued that the theater was too much like popery in appearing to offer one thing (a throne, an angel) while delivering another (a chair, a boy in a smock). In one of many contemporary polemics attacking the theater, Stephen Gosson complained:

Sometime you shall see nothing but the adventures of an amorous knight, passing from cuntry to cuntry for the love of his lady, encountering many a terrible monster made of broune paper, & at his returne, is so wonderfully changed, that he cannot be knowne but by some posie in his tablet, or by a broken ring, or a handkircher or a piece of a cockle shell, what learn you by that? When the soul of your playes is eyther meere trifles or Italian baudry, or wooing of gentlewomen, what are we taught? (1582, sig. C6)

Unlike some writers who decry the lewdness of having boy actors play female parts or the presumptuousness of having apprentices dress up like kings and princes, Gosson drew his readers' attention to the banality of the objects used to construct dramatic fictions. The word "trifle" is associated here with frivolous foreigners and foolish women, but it also registers a certain nervousness about the effect such plays might have on their audiences. Gosson's outrage might be described as a more exaggerated version of the attitude toward material culture that characterized much of literary study throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. What traditional scholarship sought in the plays was precisely what Rymer did not find in *Othello*: transcendent truths about the human condition, a world of ideas rather than a world of mere things. In this sense the scholarly lineage, like our work ethic, has been shaped by a kind of Protestant orthodoxy.

Cognition

Accordingly, more recent waves of materialist criticism have moved away from the dichotomy between subjects and objects in order to linger in the interstices and ambiguities of classification. In such studies the emphasis is on networks and systems, rather than on dyadic relationships, and on the fact that possessive individualism – which posits a clear differentiation between "us" and the "things" we own (or think we own) – is a recent concept, and should not therefore color our understanding of early modern culture. This work relies heavily on critical theory and philosophy, although it also shares with traditional material culture studies an interest in the "common" histories of early modern culture (Fumerton and Hunt 1999).

One rich vein of recent scholarship has strayed into the territory of cognitive neuroscience by considering how play-scripts operate on "our materially embodied mind/brain" (Crane 2001, 4). In some instances this approach focuses on the physical and psychological structures that our brains share in common with early modern ones (Kinney 2006). Other scholars, most notably Jonathan Gil Harris, take time as their target. Harris is particularly critical of the "national sovereignty" model of temporality in which each period of history is seen as inherently distinct from

every other. Drawing on the work of philosophers of science such as Michael Serres, he calls for a reorientation to the “polytemporal” nature of objects and warns against the tendency to fetishize the past itself as wholly separate from our current reality (2009, 2–3). What would happen, Harris asks, if we were to think of matter as a substance that contains both traces of the past and prefigurations of the future?

By contrast, Evelyn Tribble makes use of cognitive science vocabulary in ways that are decidedly synchronic, but her analysis also deconstructs traditional boundaries by theorizing materiality as constituting an intersubjective network of perception. Her work shares with earlier material culture studies a move away from the study of famous authors, but it does so by contextualizing the demands made by the repertory system on actors’ memories within the broader conditions of playing. Specifically, she suggests that each material element contributes a particular value to the overall system in which plays were performed:

The productive constraint of the stripped-down part reduces the need to filter signal (one’s own part) from noise (everyone else’s); the plot provides a schematic diagram of the shape of the play as a whole to supplement the part; the physical space of the theater and the conventions of movement it supports enable the transition from the two-dimensional maps of plot and part to its three-dimensional embodiment onstage; and the structures and protocols of the theatrical company pass on its practices to new members. (Tribble 2005, 155)

Tribble’s view of the playhouse recalls what Judith Butler (2004) describes as “the practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint.” Like Butler, whose understanding of performance is neither “automatic [n]or mechanical,” Tribble resists the idea that the material constraints of producing work within a repertory system limited the creativity of theater professionals (2005, 1). Instead, she proposes that the activities of individual players and playgoers affect the entire system, which, in turn, alters the nature of individual agents’ participation. And while she juxtaposes cognitive science methodologies with the careful archival work done by scholars such as Roslyn L. Knutson (see Chapter 18 in this volume), Tribble does not use this imported vocabulary merely to give weight to her arguments. On the contrary, she critiques earlier scholars for resorting to more easily documented case studies, such as the feuding that took place between individual actors. Instead, her work paints an organic, fluid picture of the cognitive networks at play in the performance of early modern drama.

Phenomenology and Performance

Performance, according to Erika Lin, is “the only material medium that is simultaneously the act of becoming” (2012, 9). Things like theatrical speech or early modern dance – the kinds of sensory experiences Faustus craves – are both ephemeral and substantial, destabilizing the whole idea that we can categorize matter as distinct from subjectivity. “The questions I ask,” Lin admits, putting her finger on the reason so few critics have studied early modern performance in a systematic way, “are ultimately unanswerable by traditional evidentiary standards” (9). Accordingly, she works to illuminate playing conditions by focusing on the “unstated assumptions and attitudes” that lie beneath a wide range of play scripts and cultural materials (10). In attending to the phenomenology of sight and sound, Lin’s work illuminates a form of materiality that has literally disappeared from our readings, in part because it is so difficult to make conventionally reliable claims about it.

As James Knapp has recently argued, phenomenology – which addresses things as appearances, or things as perceived by subjects, rather than things *in themselves* – “provides one of the potentially most fruitful ways around the materialist/idealist antagonism” (2014, 687). Phenomenological work on sound, smell, and other sensory experiences, for instance, has allowed scholars to move beyond the comparatively simple project of tracing overt references to cultural practices within play-scripts.⁵ Combining such insights with a broader view of performance history, Gina Bloom, Anton Bosman, and William West offer a reading of Ophelia’s intertheatricality, which they define as the web of connections that exist between theatrical texts, actors, and audiences. Unlike the allusion, which is directed backwards in time, these scholars argue that the materiality of performance is constituted by the layered memories within each iteration of Ophelia’s so-called mad scenes, creating a form of citationality that “prepares future performances” (2013, 169). Her speeches, they assert, are literally “thickened” by traces of previous performances, precisely because this character is both iconic and elusive, a “snapper up of unconsidered trifles” in her own right (173). Providing an uncanny echo of the Ghost’s command, Ophelia continually insists that her audience “mark” her words, but these words – scattered lines from popular songs – are not in any proper sense hers, and they simultaneously point at and away from the sources of her trauma. Like the herbs and flowers she distributes in this same scene, these song fragments convey meaning, but “in the sense of bringing in refined material from somewhere else” (171).

Bloom, Bosman, and West’s essay blasts apart the dichotomy between diachronic and synchronic notions of time, but it does so not by resorting to cognitive science, or to Deleuzian assemblages. Instead, it arrives at many of the same conceptual conclusions by theorizing the layered temporality of performance, which accretes immaterial experiences within the material body of the actor. What happens in the theatrical environment established by Ophelia’s fragmented, layered speeches, they argue, is that the hierarchy between actor and audience evaporates, as they come to “share a platform of embodiment that allows utterances, postures, or actions to circulate among them without programmatic reflection or mediation” (2013, 177). The authors acknowledge that cognitive science provides an analogous model of embodied memory, but, like Tribble, explicitly resist the urge to use “hard science” to justify their claims (179).

There is something reassuringly optimistic about this argument. If, on the one hand, the materiality of the archive is both elusive (it does not contain all that we wish it did) and elitist (it is available only to those with privileged access), then Bloom, Bosman, and West remind us that as playgoers we can create our own archive by engaging with Ophelia in the work of productive iteration – that is, the creation of the future history of theatrical performance. On the other hand, they also invite readers to further interrogate some key terms and assumptions. Are all the participants in a theatrical performance really equally embodied? How might questions of class, race, disability, or gender add nuance and dimensionality to theories of intertheatricality? What happens when the performance fails?

In considering the productiveness of failure I want to return, finally, to Tribble’s assertion that we can learn a great deal about the materiality of early modern theater by establishing a methodology that “takes group practices seriously, that assumes that systems can work well, and that sees individual agency as constrained but not contained by these practices” (2005, 155). It is this set of premises that allows Tribble to see the playhouse as a network of actants, but in order to conceptualize the system at work she has to focus on the reliability of the iterations it produces. It is true that failed iterations are nearly impossible to trace, precisely because they are not written into the surviving scripts. But what might we learn from the incongruous moments we

witness when attending performances of early modern plays, those moments when unpredictable material conditions provoke generative forms of improvisation?

Performance puts the spectator and the actor on the same temporal plane, even if that temporality is disrupted by the play's own lack of chronological consistency or by a moment in which theatrical meaning is reconfigured by an actor dropping a line or being drowned out by a passing airplane. Reading, by contrast, is explicitly designed to allow us to hold in our hands the words written by someone else, in another time and place. Both forms of materiality have been successfully reimagined by recent scholars, but performance, by its very nature, presents a more radically indeterminate set of roles for the various agents involved. The Furness skull, for instance, was recently loaned out to a group of students for their production of *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606) (Traister 2000, 76). Thanks to the generosity of library staff, it became a participant in a new iteration of the play, bringing live bodies into dialogue with the nineteenth-century actors who originally laid claim to the skull by physically attaching their names to it. The prop was thus transformed from an artifact into an actant. One could read the hybridity of such a performance as uncanny, but it also epitomizes the inherent contradiction of staging early modern scripts, which carry with them both material and immaterial traces of the past, and which always have the potential to create a new sort of beast. In other words, there is more to be found in the archive than manuscripts, and we do not necessarily have to linger on the things we have lost to history in order to interrogate and deepen our relationship to early modern material culture.

NOTES

- 1 This quotation appears in an 1894 letter to John Sartain, located in the correspondence section of the University of Pennsylvania's H. H. Furness Memorial Library manuscript collection, 1791–1985, box 5.
- 2 The 1623 folio contains thirty-six plays, while the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio, which also includes plays cowritten by Massinger, contains thirty-five.
- 3 It is worth noting that we might find similar models of distributed agency in indigenous ways of knowing the world that have not been recorded in written form. See Taylor (2003).
- 4 Keefer's edition (Marlowe [1592] 1990) contains passages from both the 1604 and 1616 texts; parenthetical references specify which quarto is being cited.
- 5 For an excellent survey of work that operates at the nexus of phenomenology and performance, see Karim-Cooper and Stern (2013). On smell, see Dugan (2011) and Pickett (2011); on sound see Bloom (2007) and Deutermann (2011). Each of these scholars, like Lin, is indebted to Smith (1999) and to his research on historical phenomenology more broadly.

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Part V

Playwrights, Publishers,
and Textual Studies

The Transmission of an English Renaissance Play-Text

Grace Ioppolo

As the cultural historian Robert Darnton argues, while a book moves from author to publisher to printer to distributor to reader, its path is actually a circuit because it will inevitably return in some way to the author, if only as reader (1990, 111). Renaissance play-texts, by their very nature, returned culturally and textually to their authors throughout their circuit of transmission, including and excluding print, because their transmission was not usually linear, but circular, that is, from author to acting company to theater audience to printer to literary audience, coming back to their authors in performance and print. Unlike poems, novels, short stories, and prose tracts, written for print for individual readers, plays are written for performance before communal audiences. By the time a play reached print in the English Renaissance, it usually had exhausted its theatrical run and was reincarnated into a literary text, its secondary and, for some dramatists, its lesser form.

Many theorists and historians of the book who examine the impact of Elizabethan and Jacobean play-texts on culture often concentrate only on this later reincarnation in print, oblivious of the numerous stages in the progress of the text before it became a literary or “material” text. Those actually responsible for this privileging of the printed text were the most prominent and influential figures in the “new bibliography,” including R. B. McKerrow (1927), A. W. Pollard, W. W. Greg (1907; 1956; [1923] 1966; [1924] 1966) and Fredson Bowers (1966), who derived their theories about dramatic textual transmission from their work on Shakespeare’s printed texts. Although three pages that may be in his hand appear in the extant collaborative manuscript of the unacted play *Sir Thomas More*, no extant contemporary manuscripts of any of Shakespeare’s plays exist. These textual scholars worked backward by examining his early printed texts (published as quartos and in the 1623 First Folio) and then imagining from them what his manuscripts looked like.

Autograph or scribal manuscripts of plays by Thomas Middleton, Ben Jonson, Henry Chettle, Anthony Munday, Thomas Dekker, Philip Massinger, Thomas Heywood, John Fletcher, and

other colleagues and sometime collaborators of Shakespeare do survive, so we do not have to imagine what dramatic manuscripts from this period looked like. The ample evidence about the transmission of the play-text that these documents provide has often been ignored, misinterpreted, or dismissed by many of the new bibliographers, either because they chose to focus on Shakespeare or because they lacked the skills to examine this archival material themselves.¹ But we need to focus on all stages, giving equal weight to authorial, scribal, licensing, theatrical, and print stages in the transmission of a play-text. An examination of all these usually unrecognized stages, and the historical and cultural forces at work within them, demonstrates that the final printed text does not represent the whole of a play's circuit from author to audience and back to author.

The Author and His Text

The *Diary* and financial papers of Philip Henslowe, as sharer in the Rose and other theaters and in the Lord Admiral's Men, note that his payment to a dramatist for a new play in the late 1590s ranged from £5 to £7, with the price rising to £20 in the 1610s. Acting companies performed plays in repertory, with any given play performed approximately eight to twelve times over a four- to six-month period; Roslyn L. Knutson argues that this is typical "for a new play or a revival" (1997, 468). Thus, acting companies had to have on hand a large supply of new and old plays. Henslowe hired both company dramatists (those attached for a long period to a particular acting company) and freelance authors to write new plays for him, as well as to "mend," "alter," or make "addicians" to plays he had already acquired. Writers could approach Henslowe to offer him plays that they had already written or planned to write, or he could approach writers and commission them to work for him.

Henslowe usually provided the writer with an advance on his total fee when contracting the play, paying the rest upon receipt of the finished manuscript. Many plays contracted by Henslowe either were not completed or do not survive in print, although he provides information about the performance history of some of the now-lost plays.² He employed most of the major dramatists of the age, including Jonson, John Marston, Samuel Rowley, William Byrd, Robert Daborne, George Chapman, Michael Drayton, Heywood, John Webster, Munday, Dekker, and Chettle. As most of these writers also worked at various times for other major acting companies, such as the Lord Chamberlain's/King's Men, and other major theater owners/sharers, such as his direct competitors the Burbages, Henslowe's practices were probably standard in the profession. Most noticeably, Henslowe's records suggest that the act of playwriting was a financial rather than a creative enterprise for employer and employee. His writers often seemed to have approached him simply when they needed a loan, offering an unwritten play, which they may never have intended to finish, as collateral. Henslowe occasionally records that the writer(s) (he records numerous sets of collaborators as well as single authors) read aloud an outline, and sometimes later the finished play or "book" (the correct term for a "prompt-book" in this age), of the contracted play to the acting company. Such practices may have been common rather than occasional, especially since some, such as Jonson and Shakespeare, wrote with particular company actors in mind and would want their reactions to the new plays.³ Once purchased by an acting company, a play became its property, and the author had no further fees from or claims to it.⁴

If two or more writers were working in collaboration, they most likely used the play's outline to divide up Acts or scenes, rather than sitting down and writing each scene together (although

this may have happened on occasion). Some dramatists specialized in comic and others in tragic scenes; some may only have checked or revised the finished work of their collaborators. In short, collaborators probably wrote in a number of ways, but studies of extant manuscripts and of contextual stylistics in printed texts suggest that collaborators indeed usually wrote “shares” of the text, dividing up Acts or scenes (Hoy 1956–62). Even those known for working regularly in collaboration, such as Fletcher, who wrote a number of plays with Beaumont and with others after Beaumont’s death, also wrote plays alone. Heywood claimed to have had a “maine finger” in 220 plays, but if his estimate seems high (he may have included plays by others that he revised slightly for revival), some professional dramatists wrote between thirty and seventy plays each, alone or in collaboration, during their careers (Bentley 1971, 27–8). The composition of a play took approximately six weeks, although Jonson used the Prologue to boast of completing *Volpone* in a mere five weeks “in *his owne hand without a Co-adiutor / Nouice, Iorney-man or Tutor.*”

We know from at least two uses in this period of the term “foul” papers and numerous uses of the term “fair” copy or sheet that authors distinguished between different stages of the manuscripts that they (and/or their copyists) produced.⁵ By “foul” papers authors meant the first complete draft of a new play, full of the types of cuts, additions, revisions, confusions, false starts, and inconsistencies commonly made in composition. These foul papers could contain *currente calamo* changes (made as the author composed) or later changes made after the scene or entire play was finished. Extant foul-paper or fair-copy manuscripts such as *The Captives* (in Heywood’s hand), *John a Kent and John a Cumber* (in Munday’s hand), and *Believe as You List* (in Massinger’s hand) show revisions made interlinearly, in the margin, and on interleaved or pinned- or glued-in sheets of paper. Cuts sometimes were signaled by crossing out lines of text, but more often were marked by a simple vertical line in the margin next to the text. Authors wrote most of the text (especially the dialogue) in the standard script of the period, secretary hand, a much more stylized and elaborate form of cursive handwriting than that of today. By convention, writers were supposed to use “italic” hand (the precursor of modern handwriting) for formal features such as Act-scene notations, stage directions, speech-prefixes, and character names within dialogue, but in practice, judging by the surviving manuscripts, most composing authors wrote in secretary hand throughout. Authors or scribes recopying foul papers do use italic hand when required.

Although some scholars have claimed that no extant example of foul papers exists, Heywood’s manuscript of *The Captives* (British Library Egerton MS 1994) is clearly a foul-paper text (see Figure 38.1 for an example of an authorial manuscript from the same collection as Heywood’s *The Captives*, Henry Glapthorne’s *The Lady Mother*). Heywood is in the act of composing, unsure as he writes which characters will appear in which scene, at what point they will enter, what they will say, and even what relationship they bear to the others.⁶ That the manuscript has some light notation (in Act-scene breaks and in stage directions) by another hand, probably a playhouse scribe responsible for keeping the “book” (the acting company’s master copy), does not disqualify it from the category of foul papers. Other foul-paper manuscripts also survive, although they have not been recognized as such.⁷

Heywood’s characteristics in composing can also be seen in his portions of and revisions to Munday’s original portions of the “book” of *Sir Thomas More* (British Library Harley Manuscript 7368). This “book” is one of the many extant examples of mixed foul-and fair-copy manuscripts; all of the portions (excluding Heywood’s) written by the original author, Munday, and by Dekker, Chettle, and probably Shakespeare, appear to be fair rather than foul copies. That is, these portions of the text show very little revision or alteration in the act of writing and instead show much more of the coherence, consistency, and uninterrupted fluency typical of a recopied text, as well as

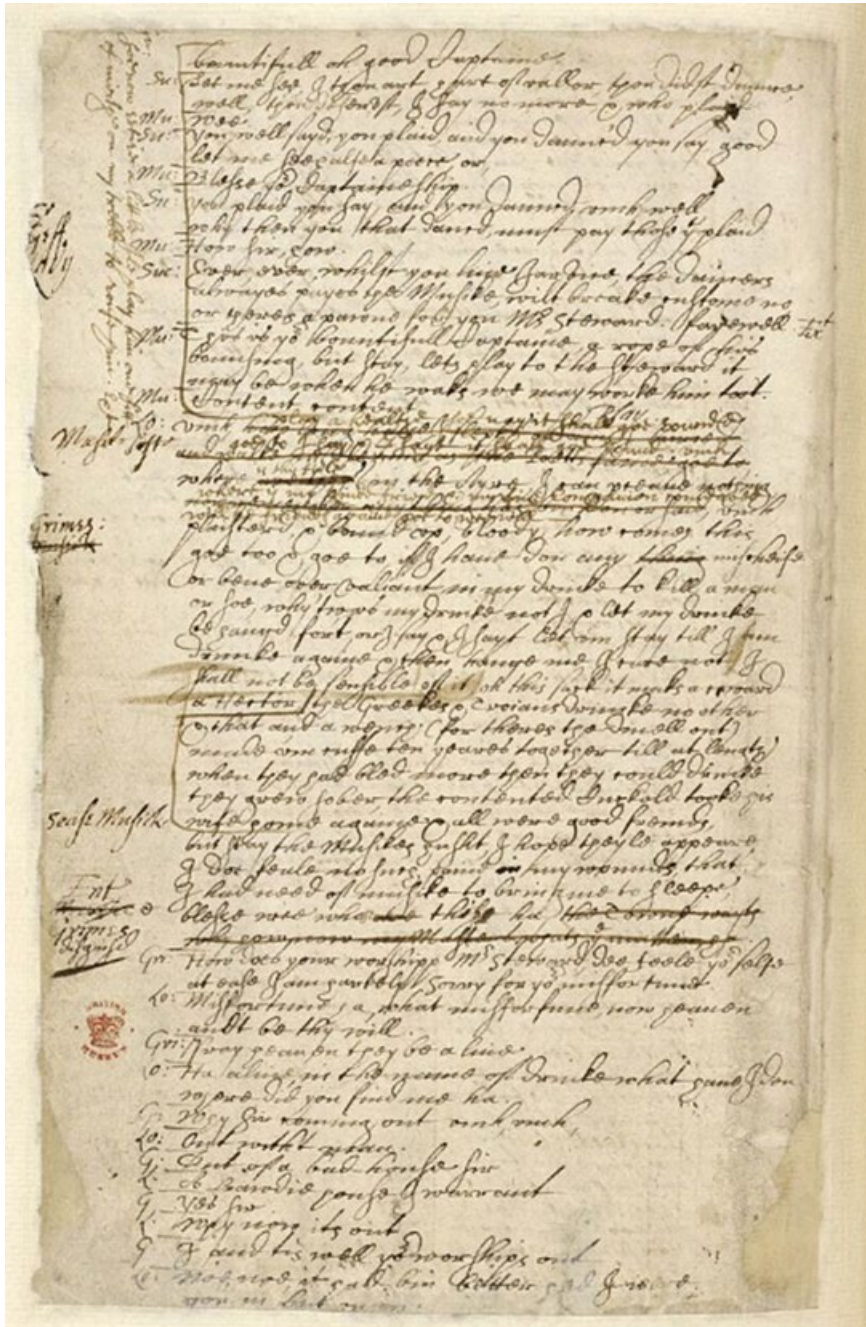


Figure 38.1 A page from Henry Glapthorne’s autograph manuscript of *The Lady Mother*, showing various layers of revisions and cuts for performance. © British Library Board (BL Egerton MS 1994).

handwriting that is slow and careful, rather than cursive or running. However, an authorial fair copy can show both correction (rectification of errors) and revision (changes of text) at times, since a dramatist, like any writer, could and did make occasional changes as he recopied his text.

Two other extant partly foul-paper manuscripts, which are also, curiously, partly fair-copy, show a mix of the composition of new material and the revision of existing material. In *Believe as You List* (British Library Egerton MS 2828), Massinger satisfied the censor's objections by revising his modern Spanish characters and setting to those of the ancient world, but simply recopied other sections. In *The Escapes of Jupiter* (British Library Egerton MS 1994), Heywood recycled material from two of his previous plays already in print, *The Silver Age* and *The Golden Age*. Even though Heywood could have pasted in and annotated the printed portions of the texts he was reusing, he chose to make a fair copy of them, revising as he went. Not surprisingly, the sections of these manuscripts in which the author is composing, rather than incorporating his older material, show *currente calamo* alterations and confusions.

The reasons that a dramatist would make a fair copy of his text, as Heywood's foul-paper manuscript of *The Captives* suggests, might be many. His handwriting while composing might be illegible to others (Heywood elsewhere acknowledged his "difficult" hand), or the text might have had so many changes (including marginal additions written any which way, not necessarily on the line they amend) that it would seem confusing, or there might be a combination of these or other reasons. Rare was the dramatist who wrote his first draft so legibly and fluently that it could be passed along to his theater company without being recopied. In fact, the playhouse scribe who tried to use Heywood's foul papers of *The Captives* to make a company "book" (largely by adding stage directions) without first recopying it evidently did not succeed. This manuscript lacks the censor's license, suggesting instead that a fair copy of it was made for him to read. Not surprisingly, more fair copies of manuscripts in the authors' hands exist than of foul-paper texts, as foul papers were relatively unimportant and likely discarded once they had been neatly copied. These fair copies include the Trinity College Cambridge manuscript (wholly in the author's hand) and the Huntington Library manuscript (partly in the author's hand) of Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess*.

However, professional scribes were also paid to copy manuscripts, and if a theater company did employ a playhouse scribe, like Edward Knight (who worked for the King's Men in the 1620s), it could find one at the local "scriptorium," or copy-house (see Beal 1998; Woudhuysen 1996). Scribes were trained to copy a text more or less as they saw it, not to alter a text's fundamental literary or theatrical features. They may have regularized the placement of stylistic or formatting features (such as speech-prefixes, stage directions, Act-scene notations, and character names), but they did not alter plot, setting, dialogue, or other authorial features. We can even find scribes who fail to correct obvious errors or who retranscribe inconsistencies. If a scribe did so, he was, in fact, doing his job properly. The idea that a scribe "collaborated," "intervened," or "interfered" in the composition of a play is not supported by evidence in any extant dramatic manuscripts of this period.

The Acting Company and Their Text

An acting company was obliged to submit a copy of any new play, or a newly revised licensed play, to the theatrical censor, the Master of the Revels, before it could be performed publicly (and probably privately, although some government decrees concentrated on "publick" shows). This copy could be either foul papers or a fair transcription of them. Experienced dramatists and

acting companies apparently knew just how far they could press the Master of the Revels, and thus probably practiced some self-censorship before the text reached his office. Of course, it is always possible that, now and then, they tested the censor with particular material, otherwise manuscripts would not show the number of censor's cuts that they do.

The extant manuscripts of the plays *Sir Thomas More*, *Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt*, *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, *The Lady Mother*, and *The Launching of the Mary* (or *The Seaman's Honest Wife*), among others, tell us what the censor did or did not contribute to the transmission of a play-text. In each of these, he has marked objectionable passages with an "X" or a vertical bar in the margin, and sometimes written ominous warnings such as "Mend this" or "I like not this" next to offensive lines. Herbert, for example, granted his license to the "book" of *The Launching of the Mary* on the condition that all the "Oaths left out In y^e action as they are crost In y^e booke & all other Reformatiōs strictly obserud may be acted not otherwyse." Herbert then signed his name, thereby granting the official license, yet remained so irritated that he then instructed the company book-keeper (responsible for preparing and regularizing the "book") to "leaue out all oathes, prophanite & publick Ribaldry as he will answer it at his perill."⁸ A few other manuscripts, including those of Fletcher's *The Honest Man's Fortune* and Massinger's *The Parliament of Love*, carry the censor's comments, although his signature was later removed by collectors or someone else. The censor would usually sign the last page of the text, immediately below the last line of dialogue (or the notation "Finis," if it appeared), but he may have sometimes signed elsewhere, such as on a separate sheet or title-page. Thus, some extant manuscripts that no longer carry a license may once have done so.

Some manuscripts that have been through the censor's hands show very little actual censorship, other than an occasional "X" or vertical line, so the task of reading through a play may not have been as onerous for the censor as it seems now. Censors did not serve as literary editors or collaborators and did not advise the author on how to improve dramatic or thematic elements of the plays, or criticize or correct errors or inconsistencies. Instead they confined themselves almost entirely to cutting offensive material. With the exception of *Sir Thomas More* (which never apparently satisfied the censor no matter how many hands tried to improve it), we have no extant manuscripts with censor's licenses that demanded that the play be submitted again. While a dramatist and censor may have trusted each other to operate under a set of mutual guidelines, each or both may have been lax (or even complicit) on occasion. Jonson, Middleton, Chapman, and Samuel Daniel, among others, tempted the various censors over the years with plays that they knew would provoke controversy. However, of the nine hundred or so plays written for the London professional stage in this period (Bentley 1971, 25), we have few examples of those provoking serious censorship before or after performance. On the whole, dramatists and their acting companies seemed to have stood little risk of serious punishment for crossing whatever strict or lax line existed between their desires and the censor's obligations. They may have had a lot to gain in increased notoriety, publicity, and admissions.⁹

Once the censor had returned his licensed copy of the play, the acting company had to prepare it for rehearsal and performance. At this point the text returned to the author if he was attached to the company. The dramatist could have also assisted the scribe who had made a fair copy before it went to the censor (any scribe copying Heywood's foul papers, for example, would have needed to consult him frequently). If the company had submitted to the censor a fair copy, from which he required few cuts or changes, the book-keeper (or another scribe, or even the author) could adjust that manuscript to suit the censor, and still use it for a company "book." Otherwise the book-keeper or another scribe, or the author himself, could recopy the text, making any

required changes. Judging from the different hands often found in a single manuscript carrying a license, the author has more often than not made the corrections required by the censor, as in *The Launching of the Mary*, *Believe as You List*, *The Soddered Citizen*, and *The Honest Man's Fortune*, among others, all of which apparently contain postlicensing revisions made by or with the guidance of the original authors.¹⁰ Thus a manuscript did not go simply to the book-keeper (as Herbert assumed in his license to *The Launching of the Mary*) after it left the censor's hands but returned via the book-keeper to the author(s) if they were still in the acting company's employ.

Once the postlicensing authorial corrections had been made to the text, the book-keeper could adjust the text to suit performance. For example, he could add Act-scene divisions or marginal notes about the properties (such as a table) or actors (by writing in their names) to be made ready for some or all scenes. He could also correct, enlarge, or cut stage directions and regularize character names. In short, he would perform any task required to make the company "book" both comprehensive and consistent for use in rehearsal and performance, when he was required to read through it in case an actor needed prompting. From this legible, complete, consistent, and coherent manuscript, whether foul or fair copied, he or other scribes could also transcribe actors' "parts," their characters' lines and preceding cue lines. We have no significant evidence in any extant dramatic manuscript of this period that the company book-keeper or another scribe rewrote or revised an author's text (although he may have recopied it), unless it was to suit the censor's demands.

An acting company with an attached dramatist (who sometimes also acted in his own plays, as Jonson and Shakespeare did) almost certainly relied on him to deal with changes to his own text. This point is repeatedly made clear by Henslowe, who used original authors, when possible, to "mend" plays at a later date. Actors could and did suggest or make changes, not always to the satisfaction of the authors, some of whom later complained.¹¹ Jonson (in *Every Man out of His Humour*) and Richard Brome (in *The Antipodes*), among others, took exception to actors cutting their texts in performance, but neither notes that actors added or revised any material (although company clowns were notorious for enlarging their parts). Changes made in rehearsal or performance were probably accepted, however reluctantly, by an author who participated in the staging of his own plays.

Even after a play had been in performance for some years, it did not cease to attract the attention of its original author or authors. Heywood, among others, used material from earlier plays to write new ones, and the majority of company dramatists seemed to have had no compunction about retouching or rehandling their earlier work, either to update it for revival or to recast it. This is not to say that a text could be rehandled by anyone; company dramatists seem to have kept some control over their own texts, but they may also have revised the plays of authors who had worked on a freelance basis or had died. In addition to foul-paper and fair-copy versions (possibly used for the licensed "book"), the acting company could have simultaneously possessed numerous other texts of a play, some slightly or highly variant. Although some scholars posit that all revisions would have been made to the company "book," it is possible that new transcripts were made instead. Although the censor was supposed to relicense any revised play, we have no evidence that he did so regularly; the company may have kept its licensed copy locked up for safekeeping, making one or more transcripts of it through the years. Their chances of being caught out if they had revised a play without relicensing it were apparently minuscule, unless they provoked controversy. Nor could the censor be expected to keep track of whether any given line in nine hundred or so plays had been altered.

An acting company, or the author of its play, would also have had reason, on occasion, to make special reading or “presentation” copies of plays to give to the monarch or other aristocratic patrons; these would usually include an ingratiating dedication page. Copies could also be specifically commissioned (for a price) by friends and others. Extant presentation or commissioned copies often show a text nearly flawlessly written and beautifully bound in vellum, with elaborate title-pages and, sometimes, gilt-edged leaves.¹² As dedicatees or commissioners would be given copies of plays they had admired in performance, their copies apparently offered the text as used in performance, that is, the “book.” A presentation or commissioned copy is a fair copy in its neatness and consistency, but it is supposed to look like a book, rather than a manuscript. Its material form, including its binding and gilt-edged pages, makes it a literary and not a theatrical object. Only the form, and not the text itself, has been usually adapted for a reader. Manuscripts especially made to serve as printer’s copy are also literary copies, designed to present a reading text that can compete with the best poetry and prose, and presented in a form (no binding or decoration required) that would ease the printer’s job. In major or minor ways, copies made strictly for print may have been altered to suit literary convention, rather than preserved to reflect performance, particularly if made by the original author.¹³

The Printer and His Text

In deciding to print a play still in repertory, a company had to weigh what they would lose (exclusive access to the text) against what they would gain (a small amount of money but more prestige or publicity).¹⁴ Although acting companies were not supposed to steal each other’s plays, they did so anyway (as comically noted in the Induction to Marston’s *The Malcontent*), and, once in print, the text could be used by any set of actors. A notorious play, like *A Game at Chess*, which attracted 3,000 people each day for nine consecutive days to the second Globe theater, would be profitable in print, even though banned from being printed. Companies (and sometimes authors) could approach a “stationer” to print their plays, or they could be approached. In this period, printing was an industry highly regulated by the government, and most London-based members of the profession belonged to the Stationers’ Company, whose rules they had to follow (but which did not extend to those outside the Company). The person who acquired the play (paying about 40s. for title to it)¹⁵ and undertook all other expenses for producing and distributing the book would be what we now term the “publisher” (and he would be male – women were not members of this or the playwriting profession until after the Restoration). A publisher could also be a printer and/or a bookseller (the Stationers’ Company had all three types of entrepreneur among its members), or he could hire others to print and to distribute and sell the books for him.

In order to print, the publisher would first need to seek the permission or “authority” of the print censor, either the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London (or their deputies), paying 6–10s. (in the case of a single play) for the privilege. The publisher would then need a “license” from one or both of the wardens of the Stationers’ Company.¹⁶ During some periods, the Master of the Revels, the theatrical censor, also served as print censor for plays only (Dutton 1991, 233, 235). In theory, the publisher was required to seek a print license “authority” in addition to the theatrical license already given to a play-text. But, in practice (as suggested by Stationers’ Company records), the wardens may have approved for publication some or many play-texts that carried only the theatrical license. Once having registered his claim with the Stationers’ wardens and received their approval or “license,” the publisher could assume the

exclusive right, among his brethren in the Company, to print it. This did not mean he had to or did print it, but that he was registering his intent to print it, and in an age before copyright, the Company's license offered him some protection against others laying claim to the play. The publisher would pay another 6d. for the wardens' license (for a single play) and as further insurance, could pay 4d. to "enter" it into the Stationers' Register.¹⁷

A typical example from this period of the entering of a play in the Register is this one:

7 Decembris [1593]

John Danter / *This copie is put ouer by the consent of John Danter to Cuthbert Burbye. vt patet.*

28 maij. 1594

Entred for his copie vnder th[e h]andes fo the wardens, a *plaine booke, intituled*, the historye of ORLANDO ffurioso. / one of the xij / peeres of Ffraunce vj^r[.] (Arber 1875–94, 2: 303)

Here we see John Danter's original entry on December 7, 1593, of *Orlando Furioso* (sold by its author to both the Queen's Men and the Lord Admiral's Men, according to a satirist).¹⁸ Danter did not print the play, perhaps because he lacked title to it (he often violated Stationers' Company rules), or because the two acting companies were still fighting over who had exclusive title to it and therefore could sell it to a publisher. On the following May 28, Danter surrendered his claim (perhaps for a fee) to Cuthbert Burby, on the condition that "the saide John Danter to haue th impryntinge thereof." Danter published the first quarto of the play in 1594.

In some entries in the Register, the wardens (or their clerks) use the formula of "a book called ..." or "a book entitled ..." for plays, poems, and prose works; in other entries they use a more specific formula for plays, such as "a book of the book called ..." or (as above) "a playbook entitled ..." This suggests that on this occasion and others, perhaps when the wardens were not satisfied that a publisher had the permission of the owners to print a play (as in James Roberts' entry of *The Merchant of Venice* on July 22, 1598), the acting company's "book" had to be produced. This "book" was usually far too valuable to be used for the printing process (unless the play was no longer active in the repertory). So even if it had been given the "authority" of the print censor, and the "license" of the Stationers' wardens, another copy would be used to print from. But at least the appearance of the acting "book" in the hands of a publisher wishing to register his claim to a play would probably have been more persuasive to a doubtful warden than another type of manuscript copy. Any other Stationers' Company member who felt that his right to a licensed play (or any other type of text) had been infringed could complain and seek redress. However, as Peter Blayney (1990) has demonstrated, members of the Company often worked out private deals among themselves that were never overseen or recorded by the Company's wardens. If the publisher who had been granted the censor's "authority" and the Stationers' Company's "license" for a play was not a printer, he would need to hire a master printer (who may have had one or more apprentice printers in his shop) to do the job for him. The publisher would usually supply the paper, at least, and his cost for producing the book had to be weighed against this and other expenses and what he would make from selling it.

The largest format (producing the largest book) used by printers was the folio, which would be printed from formes set with two pages per side, producing four pages in all (on both sides of a single sheet). A folio format would be appropriate for a large, expensive, and prestigious history book, such as Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577), or a large set of literary works, such as the collected works of Jonson (1616), Shakespeare (1623), and Beaumont and Fletcher (1647). But plays

printed individually were not as commercially profitable or marketable as other types of literary works, so they were usually printed using the cheaper format, the quarto, set from formes with four pages per side, with eight pages per sheet. Other common formats, in descending order of size from the folio and quarto, were octavo (with eight pages per side, sixteen pages per sheet), and duodecimo (twelve pages per side, twenty-four pages in total). The costs in paper and labor of printing a folio would be considerably more than those for a quarto. But, conversely, the smaller the format became, the more intricate and time-consuming the layout of the forme, for pages were not set in numerical order but in the order required to make them numerical once the sheet of paper was folded (see McKerrow 1927; Gaskell 1978). The format would also determine where the watermarks (resulting from the shape of wires in the frame or mold in which paper was made from a mixture of wet rags) and chain lines (the vertical lines from the frame) would appear. In a folio page, the watermark could appear in the middle of one or more pages, and the chain lines would run vertically. However, in a quarto, the watermark could end up sideways in the middle (and thus partially or wholly obscured by the binding) of two pages, with the chain lines running horizontally.

Numerous types of texts served as printer's copy in this period. If an acting company still had access to a dramatist's foul papers, perhaps made obsolete by a later fair copy, they could submit those to a printer, to avoid risking the loss of a more important copy. Or they could submit a transcript of any stage of a play's transmission: an early or later fair copy (authorial or scribal) of the foul papers or of the "book" or another transcript, or the manuscript especially copied for the printer (by a conscientious dramatist like Jonson or a scribe), or even an annotated copy of an early printed edition of the play. As noted above, the copy they could not afford to submit to the printing house would be the actual "book" or whatever other copy contained the license of the Master of the Revels, for once they surrendered this copy, they would have no protection against prosecution should a performance of the play provoke controversy. Some acting companies may have loaned copies of their plays to printers, but the actual process of using a text to set type would incur some damage to it. This may be the reason no printer's copy (except for a few nondramatic texts of this period) survives.

Before beginning to set type, the compositor would need to "cast off" his copy. That is, he would have to count off and mark (usually with a small symbol in the margin) the number of lines in the copy that he could fit onto each page. For example, a quarto usually contained between thirty-eight and thirty-nine lines of type per page. Casting off verse lines in a manuscript would be easy, but casting off prose lines (and long stage-directions as in dumb shows) would be more difficult. The more experienced a compositor was, the easier he would find it to cast off prose lines, or to squeeze in or stretch out type whenever he had not cast off correctly. Type was hand-set, line by line, by the compositor, who picked up the correct letter, numeral, punctuation mark, or blank space type from his "case" and put it into his composing stick, which would accommodate a few lines. The compositor's case had its contents laid out in specific ways, with capital letters usually at the top (hence "upper-case") and lower-case ones at the bottom. Letters were not always laid out alphabetically, but a compositor would become as familiar with the case's layout as a professional typist is with a computer keyboard. Thus he could set type into his composing stick by reaching for a piece of type without looking at the case. (This explains why words are occasionally misprinted with a wrong piece of type in place of the correct one to which it is adjacent in the compositor's case.) Once his compositor's stick was full, he would transfer the type to a page-sized tray (or a longer "galley" tray) until it was full, and then tie it up with string. When he had finished all the other pages to be printed in the forme, he would enclose the pages within a "chase" or frame, and then the forme would be ready to use.

When it came time to print, the forme would be locked into the printing press, with all the type daubed with ink. The pressmen would crank the press so that it would force a sheet of paper against the type. They would usually print off sample copies of each forme, proofread them, mark errors, and then stop the press to adjust the type and make corrections. But those sheets that were being run off before the press was stopped for correction would not be wasted, even though uncorrected, and would still be used. Nevertheless, careful proofreading seems to have been more common in the printing of the more luxurious folio-sized books, for some play quartos in this period show little stop-press correction. We know that Ben Jonson, at least, stood in the printing house and read his own proofs. We also know of another dramatist, Chettle, who was himself a printer and member of the Stationers' Company. While we may not have as much direct or implied evidence about other dramatists, we cannot always conclude with certainty whether they did or did not concern themselves with the process of putting their plays into print.

For example, extant copies of printed quartos of Philip Massinger's plays *The Duke of Milan* (1623), *The Bondman* (1624), *The Roman Actor* (1629), *The Renegado* (1630), *The Picture* (1630), and *The Emperour of the East* (1632) all show numerous corrections (and a few revisions) in his own hand (Greg [1923] 1966; [1924] 1966). Whether Massinger took as much time correcting other errors during printing as he did afterwards is difficult to prove because we lack the corresponding evidence. It is only because these authorially annotated quartos still survive that we can see his continuing concern with the quality of his text, long after the foul papers left his hands. That such quartos may have once existed for the numerous other dramatists of this period, including Shakespeare, should at least be considered. Most Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists probably continued to see their plays as their own artistic and intellectual property, perhaps without a finished or final form but as a continual work in progress.

With or without stop-press correction, the forme would be used to print as many copies of the pages as were required for the number of books to be sold. The sheets from this impression on the outer forme would then be hung to dry, and, once dry, the sheets could be turned over and pressed on to the inner forme for the next set of pages, and then dried again. Then the sheets would be bundled into like piles so that a worker could construct a book by picking up one sheet from each pile in the correct order. The sheets could then be left unfolded, if going to a binder, or folded, if being sent out for sale. For an expensive book, the publisher would usually be willing to pay a binder to sew the pages carefully together and then cover the book with leather or some other type of decorative material. Other copies could be left unbound so that buyers could later choose their own binding. However, most quartos were usually stitched lightly together through the spine, with a front cover consisting only of its title-page, or blank pages left over on a forme from printing the title-page, or some other scrap paper.

Pages were not usually numbered individually but carried "signatures" (used by printers to keep track of the order of pages printed), consisting of a numbered letter (such as "B3") printed on each recto page. Thus, in a quarto (in which, for example, the A signature has been reserved for prefatory material), for the first eight pages, there can be found signatures B1, B2, and B3 on the first three recto pages, with the fourth left blank, although it assumed the signature of B4. (We now identify the verso pages by the previous signature; hence the verso of B1 would be considered B1v.) This process would be repeated with each letter of the alphabet (except "J," which was usually seen as identical to "I," and "V," which would seem identical to "U"), until the correct number of pages was printed off. One or more sheets sewn together constitute a "gathering." If the sheets have been laid inside each other, rather than just situated on either side of each other, the gathering is "quired." If quired, the pages have not been printed by single sets of

an inner and outer forme (to print four pages, for a folio, or eight, for a quarto, at a time), but by multiple sets of formes (for example, three sets of an inner and outer forme to create twelve folio pages at a time), in a grouping sufficient to place the pages in the proper order when bound.

Unless the book had been printed illegally, the publisher would usually include on its title-page a notice of the bookseller who would act as the book's distributor, selling it wholesale for about 4d. per quarto to other Stationers' Company members, or retail for about 6d. per quarto (Blayney 1997, 411). For example, the title-page of the anonymous play *The Taming of a Shrew* (either a source play or analogue of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*) notes that copies have been "Printed at London by Peter Short and *are to be sold by Cutbbert Burbie, at his shop at the Royall Exchange.*" While this imprint tells us that Peter Short was the printer and Cutbbert Burby the bookseller, we cannot distinguish which of them (or what other person) served as publisher. Some title-pages offer more information, using the formula "Printed for X by Y and are to be sold by Z," for example, but imprints cannot always be trusted to give us the exact (or even the correct) information about who was involved in a play's publication.

Folios would, of course, fetch a much higher price than the 6d. for quarto texts. Blayney notes that the 1616 Jonson folio sold for between 9s. and 10s. unbound, and 13s. to 14s. with a calf-skin binding, while the 1623 Shakespeare folio probably sold for 15s. unbound, 16–18s. with a plain binding, and £1 with a leather binding. Blayney estimates that a publisher would need to spend approximately £9 to acquire the authority and license, purchase the paper and pay all printing expenses (to compositors, proofreaders, pressmen, etc.) for a run of 800 books printed in quarto format. Even if he sold all his copies, he would have made relatively little profit (Blayney 1991, 2, 32; 1997, 406–9, 410–11, 422 n. 61).

Neither did folio publishers become rich from their endeavors, even when they pointed out how cost-efficient their texts were for buyers. For example, the very experienced printer Humphrey Moseley noted in the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio: "Heretofore when Gentlemen desired the copy of any of these Playes, the meanest piece here . . . cost them more than foure times the price you pay for the whole Volume" (Beaumont and Fletcher 1647, sig. A3v). The type of person who had the spare cash to purchase quartos and folios could vary from a nearly impoverished university or law student to a middle-class businessman (or his wife) to a prosperous aristocrat. Moseley also claims that had he included too many plays, "it would have rendred the Booke so Voluminous, that *Ladies* and *Gentlewomen* would have found it scarce manageable, who in Workes of this nature must first be remembred" (sig. A3). Whether Moseley was worried about the intellectual or the physical weight of the books for female readers is not clear, but his admonition that gentlewomen must be remembered "first" in the publication of plays suggests that they were avid consumers of this theatrical-turned-literary product.

Jonson participated in the printing of his plays in folio, but the Shakespeare and the Beaumont and Fletcher folio editions were put together after their deaths by their fellow actors. These three dramatists did not contribute to the enshrining of their reputation in expensive, luxurious, and prestigious volumes for literary audiences. Ben Jonson claims in his elegy to his fellow dramatist and actor in the Shakespeare folio, "Thou art a Monument, without a tombe, / And art aliue still, while thy Booke doth liue, / And we haue wits to read." Two pages earlier, Heminge and Condell had acknowledged to their readers that one of their main aims in collecting Shakespeare's works was financial: "It is now publique, & you will stand for your priuiledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth commend a Booke, the Stationer saies" (Hinman 1968, 9, 7). A dramatist who engaged in a financial agreement with an acting company manager or sharer (such as Henslowe or Burbage)

in composing a play eventually engaged, with or without his consent, in a financial agreement with his publishers. Another elegist in the Shakespeare folio claimed, "This Booke, / When Brasse and Marble fade, shall make thee looke / Fresh to all Ages" (Hinman 1968, 15). All of those English Renaissance dramatists whose plays survived in print past their own generation have stayed fresh to the succeeding generations of readers, and their play-texts have been preserved not solely for reading audiences, but as theater scripts, for they remain, primarily, performing texts for generations of theater audiences. Here we have the final reminder that play-texts, which returned to their authors at various stages throughout their original transmission, move continually and circularly back to the theater from whence they came.

NOTES

- 1 Two works I place in this category are Bowers (1966) and Werstine (1997). Bowers sets out numerous authoritative theories about their composition and transmission in his book, drawing from other scholars' work. Werstine, likewise, relies almost entirely on the work of others in discussing the characteristics and provenance of manuscripts.
- 2 In 1602, for example, Henslowe's entry for a five-shilling advance to "antony monday & thomas deckers" in "earnest of a booke called Jeffae" is followed by another entry for a twenty-shilling payment to "harey chettel for the mendynge of the fyrste parte of carnouille wollsey" (purchased new from Chettle, Munday, and Michael Drayton in 1601). Thus he has contracted a new play called *Jeffa* (probably *Jephthah*) and has paid for revisions of an old one, *The First Part of (the life of) Cardinal Wolsey*, which he already owned. Neither play survives in print or manuscript, although Henslowe records payments he made to license, provide costumes for, and/or pay for wine at the first reading of the plays (Foakes and Rickert 1961, 202, 183, 181, 201). The Henslowe-Alleyn papers, including Henslowe's "Diary," are available online at www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk.
- 3 Robert Daborne promises in his correspondence with Henslowe, "One Tuesday night if y^u will appoynt J will meet y^e & m^r Allin [Edward Alleyn] & read some [portions of a new play] for J am vnwilling to read to y^e general company till all be finisht" (Greg 1907, 70).
- 4 A satirist chastised Greene in 1592 for "cony-catching" (or double-dealing one play to two buyers), demanding indignantly, "Aske the Queens Players, if you sold them not *Orlando Furioso* for twenty Nobles [worth about ten shillings each] and when they were in the country, sold the same play to the Lord Admirals men for as much more" (*The Defence of Conny Catching*, sigs. C3–C3v). Henslowe records only one 1592 performance of the play by the Admiral's Men, collecting 16s. 6d. If this was the total return on his investment, Henslowe paid dearly for Greene's "cony-catching" (Foakes and Rickert 1961, 16).
- 5 Edward Knight, an experienced playhouse scribe and official book-keeper of the King's Men acting company, consulted the "fowle papers of the author" in recopying Fletcher's play *Bonduca* (British Library Add MS 36758), and Daborne used the term "foule" sheet in correspondence with Henslowe. Daborne also refers repeatedly to the more polished "fayre" sheets he will supply Henslowe of his foul papers (Greg 1907, 78, 69, 72). The theatrical censor Sir Henry Herbert demands a "fayre" copy of the next play he is expected to license while chastising the writer of the manuscript of *The Launching of the Mary* (British Library Egerton MS 1994).
- 6 See the original manuscript (British Library Egerton MS 1994) or Brown (1953).
- 7 Other foul papers are Walter Mountfort's *The Launching of the Mary* and the first two and a quarter pages (which I believe to be in the author's hand) of the manuscript of Jonson's 1609 *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* (Public Record Office Manuscript, State Papers 14/44/62*).
- 8 British Library MS Egerton 1994, fol. 349v. On Herbert's fairly typical treatment of one manuscript, see Walter's preface to his Malone Society Reprints edition of *The Launching of the Mary* (1933, x).

- 9 Jonson's *Eastward Ho* and Middleton's *A Game at Chess* profited from the notoriety of their scandalous plays. See "Life of Jonson" and *Conversations with Drummond* in Herford, Simpson, and Simpson (1925–52, 1: 38–9, 140), and Bald's edition of *A Game at Chess* (1929, 162). For other cases, see Dutton (1991, 182ff).
- 10 See the Malone Society Reprints edition of each of the first three, vols. 65 (1933), 55 (1927), and 71 (1936), and Gerritsen (1952).
- 11 Humphrey Moseley, who printed the collected plays of Beaumont and Fletcher in 1647, notes in his address to readers, "When these *Comedies* and *Tragedies* were presented on the Stage, the *Actours* omitted some *Scenes* and *Passages* (with the *Authour's* consent) as occasion led them" (sig. A3).
- 12 These include manuscripts made by professional scribe Ralph Crane of Middleton's *A Game at Chess* and *The Witch* and of Fletcher's (?) *Demetrius* and *Enantbe*.
- 13 Ben Jonson (?) in prefaces to *Sejanus* and *Epicœne* exactly what he had done to make them suitable for reading audiences (Herford, Simpson, and Simpson 1925–52, 4: 351, 5: 161). If we trust Jonson, dramatists who prepared printer's copy could provide a text of the play as first composed, or they could amend the text used in the theater. In any case, they would be reclaiming their texts to suit their own artistic requirements.
- 14 Greg notes that the King's Men asked the Lord Chamberlain to prevent publication of their plays in 1619, 1637, 1641, and possibly 1600 in order to keep them out of the hands of other acting companies (1956, 77).
- 15 This is the amount offered by the character John Danter (named for the notorious printer) in Act 1, scene 3 of *The Second Part of the Return from Parnassus*. Blayney (1997, 395–6) offers other contemporary allusions to this amount. See also Tara Lyons, Chapter 39 in this volume.
- 16 Blayney disputes Greg's interpretation of the contemporary terms of "authority," "license," and "entrance"; I cautiously use Blayney's definition and interpretation of these terms (Blayney 1997, 400–4). See also Blayney (2013).
- 17 Blayney (1997, 404) disagrees with Greg (1956) that entry in the Stationers' Register was required. I am not entirely convinced by Blayney's argument here, but I use his figure of 4d. for entries, even though the entries of individual plays give the fee as 6d. Unless this fee records the "license" and not the "entry" fee, Blayney is in error.
- 18 See n. 4.

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Publishers of Drama

Tara L. Lyons

From 1580 to 1640, nearly a thousand editions of drama were published in England.¹ The bulk of these works were professional plays, those performed after 1576 in London's purpose-built theaters. English men and women read these professional playbooks in a range of shapes and sizes, from thin quarto editions with cheap paper covers to elegant folio volumes bound in tooled calfskin. In the booksellers' shops, professional playbooks such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* were sold alongside religious texts, Bibles, schoolbooks, newsbooks, and almanacs, as were nonprofessional plays, including closet dramas, masques, progress entertainments, civic pageants, Latin university plays, and translations of classical drama. These non-professional plays could be purchased in an even greater variety of formats: miniature pocketbooks, lengthy quarto compilations, and stately two-volume folios.

For such a rich array of works, we have the publishers of the early modern book trade to thank.² These agents chose to finance the material production of dramatic texts, sometimes investing large sums of their own money in the process, such as when publishing large folios or collections. As Zachary Lesser (2004) explains, publishers' livelihoods depended upon their ability to predict how readers would respond to a text; hence, a publisher's decision to publish a book reflected his or her belief that the work would return a profit. Potential profitability surely guided publishers' selections of dramatic texts, but financial gain was not the only factor, as Lesser and others concur (Straznicky 2013, 6). An agent's "choice" to publish a piece of drama may have served any number of ideological agendas or simply reflected the material, economic, and social pressures of the trade, including costs of paper or other materials, availability of manuscripts from the playhouses, guild regulations, and state and ecclesiastical censorship. Reconstructing why a text was published using the often incomplete historical records from the period also poses its own challenges, but the traces left by individual stationers in guild registers, court documents, and wills in addition to extant editions provide us with a wealth of data to mine for answers.

What Is a Publisher?

Publishing in early modern England was not a profession but a means for printers or booksellers to supplement their incomes as printers or booksellers. The term “publisher” then denotes those agents who engaged in the processes of publication: financing the material production of a text and in turn speculating on its sale. Paying upfront costs for a book’s production was the publisher’s responsibility. As Peter Blayney (1997) explains, the publisher paid for the manuscript, the allowance and license to print a book, the entrance in the Stationers’ Register, the paper upon which the book was printed, and the labor of the printer and his or her employees to set the type, ink the pages, work the press, and fold and assemble copies. Once an edition was produced, the publisher vended copies at a wholesale price to retail booksellers; thus, he or she earned money predominantly by selling books not to individual customers – although that certainly was an option – but to other booksellers (389–92). Publishers’ obligations did not end here, for they needed to ensure that their products would appeal to consumers. On any day in early modern England, publishers could be found developing specializations and creating new readerships (Lesser 2004); editing texts to perfect an edition (Massai 2007); designing title-pages that would impel a reader to buy (Farmer and Lesser 2000); translating works and writing prefatory materials (Melnikoff 2005, 2009); and developing marketing strategies to encourage multitext sales (Lyons 2012). The many different strategies that publishers developed to secure their investments highlight their ingenuity in marketing as well as their drive to earn profits.

Four women and 203 men are known to have published drama in England from 1580 to 1640. All of these publishers were “stationers,” a term that denotes anyone who engaged in book production or distribution, although by 1580 the term more specifically referred to members of the Stationers’ Company of London (Straznický 2013, 1). This guild-like organization acquired a royal charter in 1557, granting it authority to regulate the production and trade of books within the city. Women published, printed, and sold books alongside their husbands, and widows of deceased stationers inherited businesses as well as the privileges of a “freeman” in the Company. Nearly all of these 207 publishers worked in London, the center of the English book trade, with just eight engaged as printers and/or publishers in Oxford or Cambridge. Other agents surely published drama during this period, but some playbooks have been lost and the absence of stationers’ names from the archive prevents us from assigning agency to them.³

Title-page imprints and colophons in extant editions are responsible for much of what we know about publishers, their roles, and their collaborations with other stationers. Imprints and colophons contain information about a book’s production such as who printed the work, who published the work, and where copies were sold. For example, the imprint from the title-page of the university play *The Return from Parnassus* (1606) states that copies were “Printed by G. Eld, for John Wright, and are to bee sold at his shop at Christ church Gate.” In this instance, we can identify John Wright as the publisher, as the work was printed “for” him. Eld, then, was the printer, paid by Wright to manufacture the edition. After it was “Printed by G. Eld,” the playbook was sold wholesale to other retail booksellers from Wright’s shop at “Christ church Gate.”

Like Wright, most stationers who engaged in publication were “booksellers” by profession. These stationers earned their income by purchasing texts at the wholesale discount from other publishers and then selling them at higher prices to consumers. Nevertheless, if they saw an opportunity to profit, they would publish a book, as Wright did with the *Parnassus* play and a remarkable twenty-eight other play editions throughout the forty-one years of his career, the highest number of any single stationer in the period. The printer, George Eld, also published

a number of books, including four professional playbooks and a collection of Thomas Middleton's entertainments. When issuing *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607), Eld acted not only as the publisher and printer of the edition, but also as its wholesale bookseller; the imprint on the title page reveals, "Printed by G. Eld and are to be sold at his house in Fleete-lane at the signe of the Printers-Press. 1607." Not many printers possessed the space in their printing houses to store and distribute hundreds of copies, but apparently Eld's facilities allowed him to do just that.

Still, for Eld and other printers, the larger part of their income was derived from printing books for other stationers, not publishing. Indeed, of the 207 stationers publishing drama from 1580 to 1640, only fifty-five were printers by profession. These numbers are indicative of larger trends in the trade over time, as the percentage of books published by printers declined from 1570 to 1650, with far more booksellers taking on the jobs and the profits (Lesser 2004, 33, 29). Publishing was the most lucrative venture for stationers, but printers were often discouraged from engaging in the enterprise due in part to regulations enforced by the Stationers' Company. In attempts to prevent individual printers or small groups from monopolizing the printing trade, the Company limited the number of presses in the city as well as the number of master printers and apprentices allowed to work them (Lesser 2004, 35). Consequently, while booksellers were growing their businesses without much interference, printers were prevented from expanding their workloads as well as their profit margins, and were therefore less able to raise the capital for publishing projects.

As Edward Arber tells us, "Of necessity, books must, on average, pay the Speculator" (1875–94, 1: xv), and publishers of drama in early modern England were speculators, because they paid for a book's production before ever seeing a penny in return. The publisher was the financier, which meant that it was his or her investment that was lost if a book did not sell well. If an edition like *The Return from Parnassus* had been a flop, Wright's investment would have been in danger. Publishers only began profiting after they recouped their initial investment, which for the standard 800 copies of a nine-sheet quarto playbook was approximately nine pounds (Blayney 1997, 409). However, Eld would have been no worse off; his fee for printing the playbook would have been paid in advance by Wright. Therefore, the risk was clearly different depending on the role a stationer played in producing a playbook.

The Risk

Were playbooks worth the risk for early modern publishers? This is still a matter of debate in Renaissance scholarship. Blayney uses statistical analysis to show that professional playbooks on average did not pay the speculator. Using the nine pound estimate of upfront costs and approximating London retail and wholesale prices with storage costs, Blayney finds that if a publisher could sell out an entire playbook edition in ten years, he or she would only begin to earn profits after the sixth year, and those profits would have been rather low, totaling approximately £1 10s. a year for the next four years (1997, 412). Such small profits did not justify the risk and labor that went into publication, that is, unless the book went into a second edition for the same publisher. When issuing a second or subsequent edition, the publisher's investment typically was limited to the costs for paper and printing, minus payments for the manuscript, entrance, and licensing. A second edition usually meant that the first edition was selling well and the publisher expected customer demand to remain high. Yet, as Blayney demonstrates, from 1583 to 1642, "Fewer than 21 percent of the plays published ... reached a second edition inside nine

years" (389). Blayney concludes that professional playbooks were "not the best-selling moneyspinners that so many commentators have evidently believed they *should* have been" (416).

Alan Farmer and Zachary Lesser disagree. By contextualizing the reprint rates of printed playbooks with other speculative publications, they find that, from 1576 to 1625, professional playbooks "were reprinted at more than twice the rate of speculative books in general" (2005, 28). Although Farmer and Lesser acknowledge a decline in reprint rates for playbooks in the Caroline period (1626 to 1642), their analysis and data overall lead them to conclude:

Plays were, in fact, among the most successful books in which an early modern stationer could choose to invest. They turned a profit more reliably than most other types of books, and this profit would not have been paltry, as many have claimed, but rather would have been fairly typical for an edition of books. (2005, 6)

The reprint rates cited in these essays apply only to books of professional drama. The sale of nonprofessional plays has received much less attention, although it has not been overlooked. Blayney, for instance, acknowledges that his list of best-selling plays, those with the highest number of reprints in a period of twenty-five years, looks much different when he includes nonprofessional drama in his calculations (1997, 388). The professional play *Mucedorus* (1598) with ten editions in twenty-one years remains the best-selling play, but in second place is Samuel Daniel's closet drama *Cleopatra* (1594) with eight editions in seventeen years, then *Doctor Faustus* (1604) with eight editions in twenty-four years, followed by Thomas Randolph's university plays in collection, *Aristippus* and *The Conceited Pedlar* (1630) with seven editions in twenty-five years.⁴ As these numbers show, nonprofessional drama could outsell professional plays, but as a class of books, they typically did not. When we compare the two classes of drama during the period, nonprofessional plays sold at only half the rate of professional ones, although the reprint rate of nonprofessional plays was equivalent to other speculative publications from 1576 to 1624 (Lesser 2011, 532). Therefore, nonprofessional drama was not a bad investment for publishers, especially in the Caroline period when nonprofessional plays were reprinted at a higher rate than even professional ones (532 n. 30).⁵ And, in the 1620s and 1630s, the short length of some topical dramas like city entertainments may have allowed publishers to turn a profit with only a first edition.

The dramatic texts published in England from 1580 to 1640 document the plays that stationers believed were worth the risk. More than two-thirds of these texts had been performed in the professional theaters. If we look at these publication data over three separate twenty-year periods, publishers' rising interest in professional drama becomes apparent. From 1580 to 1599, professional plays comprised more than half (63.6 percent) of the dramatic editions published in England. The percentage increased to 70.3 percent from 1600 to 1619 and held about steady at 70.8 percent from 1620 to 1639. These numbers might lead one to assume that few publishers even bothered to invest in nonprofessional plays, but this is not the case. Among the 207 publishers, nearly half (100 stationers) invested in at least one nonprofessional play.

Almost two-thirds of the agents who were publishing nonprofessional works dabbled in both kinds of drama, even sometimes in the same edition, as in William Stansby's publication of Ben Jonson's *Works* (1616) or John Dawson's publication of Thomas Nabbes's *Plays, Maskes, Epigrams, Elegies, and Epithalamiums: Collected into one Volume* (1639). The publishers investing in multitext collections like Jonson's and Nabbes's were also more likely to publish nonprofessional drama in those collections, at least before 1621. Indeed, from 1580 to 1599, approximately 73.7 percent

of the drama published in collected formats was nonprofessional, and from 1600 to 1619, roughly 61.1 percent was nonprofessional. That percentage changed dramatically as professional plays became more amenable to the collected format in the 1620s, reflecting (as well as contributing to) their elevation in status as literary “works.” From 1620 to 1639, more professional plays were printed in collections, with nonprofessional plays comprising only 31 percent of drama in collected editions.

Quantitative data effectively highlight larger trends in dramatic publication over time, but they alone cannot tell us how and why stationers made decisions about publishing certain texts and formats. Case studies can shed more light on this area, and the stationers who published the most dramatic texts within each decade from 1580 to 1640 offer a telling sample of agents and titles for our examination. By focusing on the choices of some of the most active publishers of drama in the period, what comes to the fore is both the variety of dramatic kinds and multiplicity of formats in which stationers invested. The numbers above and the examples below make one point clear: to appreciate fully the work of early modern publishers of drama, we must look beyond the professional playbook.

1580s: Thomas Marsh

When Thomas Marsh (printer from 1554 to 1587) published Seneca’s *Ten Tragedies* (1581), the volume became England’s first multiplay collection of dramatic works in the vernacular, and Marsh became the English stationer with the largest number of plays in print. During the 1580s, only eight editions of professional drama were published. Apparently, publishers were unconvinced that professional plays could be profitable, or perhaps manuscripts from the professional theaters were simply unavailable for printing. Instead, Marsh and many fellow stationers invested in Greek and Roman plays and their translations, which according to the humanist pedagogical tradition were thought to teach lessons on temperance, the evils of pride, and the joys of the *via media*. Of the thirty-three editions printed in this decade, sixteen were classical in origin, with ten of these appearing in Marsh’s collection.

To assist with his selection of publications, Marsh developed specializations in certain genres and topics. As Lesser explains, publishers specialized to appeal to specific groups of buyers and ultimately to protect their investments, for a publisher who specialized could keep customers coming back for the same types of books (2004, 8). Marsh’s portfolio was broad, from religious treatises to monstrous birth pamphlets. One of his most successful publications was *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), a quarto collection of tragic poems depicting the fall of great princes, which merited expanded second (1563) and third editions (1574). By 1580, Marsh was selling three more quarto collections in the “mirror for princes” genre, including Antonio de Guevara’s *The Dial of Princes* (1568), copublished with Richard Tottell; Justinus’ *The Histories of Trogus Pompeius* (1564; 1570); and Matteo Bandello’s *Certain Tragical Discourses* (1567; 1579). All of these works participated in the *de casibus* tradition and advice-to-princes genre with their tales of great leaders succumbing to vice. These works were selling well to England’s would-be counselors and hopeful courtiers, likely men at the Inns of Court who were in training to become lawyers or Court advisors, and had much to learn from historical examples. The title-page for *A Mirror*, for instance, promised just this sort of content: “Wherein may be seen by example of other, with howe greuous plagues vices are punished: and howe frayle and vnstable worldly prosperity is founde, even of those whom fortune seemeth most highly to fauour.”

The *Ten Tragedies* could be marketed to these same readers, for the collection compiled edifying stories of kings and queens whose ambition, pride, and lust led to their falls. The tragedies, in fact, were designed by their translators to prompt self-reflection. The Chorus in Jasper Heywood's *Troas* warned readers to remember that Hecuba is a "mirrour . . . to teach you what you are" (1581, sig. O7v), and Alexander Neville likewise proposed that Oedipus is "A mirror meete. A patern playne, of princes carefull thrall" (1581, sig. N2). From Marsh's printing house, conveniently located near the Inns of Court where some of the Senecan translators and authors of *A Mirror for Magistrates* had studied, the *Ten Tragedies* could be sold alongside similar titles, perhaps even marketed to the thousands of customers buying editions of *A Mirror*, which by 1581 was in its fourth edition and making Marsh a pretty profit.

1590–1599: Thomas Creede and Cuthbert Burby

Far more stationers published drama in the 1590s than in the previous decade. In the 1580s, just fourteen publishers of drama are on record; in the 1590s, the number rose to thirty-five. The most significant increase in the market for drama was in professional plays. Eighty-one editions hit the bookstalls in the 1590s, up from just eight in the previous decade.⁶ Two stationers contributed significantly to this increase, Thomas Creede (printer from 1593 to 1617) and Cuthbert Burby (bookseller from 1592 to 1607). Each published eleven playbooks in the 1590s, which made them the most active dramatic publishers in the decade. Creede and Burby were participants in what scholars call the 1594 "boomlet," a watershed year for dramatic publication when seventeen new (first edition) professional playbooks entered the market. Before 1594, only twenty-four new professional playbooks had even been printed.

Scholars have yet to agree on why so many first editions appeared in 1594, although the answers are likely connected to the new marketing initiatives of the theater companies and a group of young London stationers. A. W. Pollard proposed that the professional players, suffering financially after the theaters were closed during a plague outbreak in 1592–3, sold their manuscripts to the stationers to cover debts (1917, 43–4). Blayney offers a competing explanation: that the companies released the manuscripts to advertise the reopening of the playhouses in late 1593. The sums earned from the sale of manuscripts would have been too small to counteract pressing debts, but a flood of playbooks in the market could spark renewed interest in the companies (1997, 386). Blayney's assertions are supported by the fact that of the seventeen professional plays published for the first time in 1594, thirteen advertised a playing company on their title-pages. Scholars, in fact, have proposed that Thomas Creede was actively working with the Queen's Men's Players on distributing their titles in print (Pinciss 1970; McMillan and MacLean 1998, 86). If the stationers and theater companies were collaborating in 1594, then exploiting the connection between the page and stage was a vital part of the marketing for both parties. Nonetheless, it still remains unclear why so many publishers were willing to invest in a class of books that had not yet proven itself profitable in stationers' stalls.

The publishers who invested in the most editions of drama in the 1590s provide us with some possible explanations. In 1594, both Creede and Burby were eager to establish their rights to copy plays. Creede, for example, entered into the Stationers' Register a total of six professional plays within the year, the largest number entered to any stationer at the time. Entrance in the Register documented an agent's right to copy a title, thereby discouraging other stationers from printing it without permission. Entrance was not required of any publisher, at least not before

1622 and probably not until after 1637 (Blayney 1997, 404), although for Creede, protecting his investment by paying the sixpence entry fee per play and entering its title into the Register was essential to the publishing process. Burby also entered into the Register three professional plays in 1594. The combined entrances for the two stationers made up one-third of the twenty-seven professional plays entered between December 1593 and May 1595 (Blayney 1997, 385). The rate at which these plays were entered was unprecedented. With so many new plays becoming available, Creede and Burby likely felt the pressure to compete, and neither wanted to be left behind if professional plays became bestsellers. If the stationers predicted that the fad for playbooks would decline after a short period of high demand, then it was better to get in early on the venture. The sudden rise in supply surely discouraged some stationers from investing, but it also persuaded others to act. Even if their playbooks were competing with other similar titles, the surge in publication would have caused more of a stir in the bookshops than just a handful of playbooks in one or two booksellers' stalls. Creede and Burby were probably betting on the notion that supply can create its own demand.

Another important factor also likely influenced these publishers' investments. Most of the 1594 publishers were young professionals seeking to make names for themselves in the London book trade. When Creede and Burby published three plays each in 1594, both were beginning to establish their own businesses. In 1593, Creede opened his own printing house in Thames Street, and in 1594, Burby was launching his bookselling business under St. Mildred's Church, having been freed from his apprenticeship just two years earlier. Eight other publishers issued first-edition professional playbooks that year. Richard Jones, Edward White, and John Danter were not new to dramatic publication. Both Jones (active 1563 to 1613) and White (active 1566 to 1613) were well-established members of the Stationers' Company. But Danter, Creede, Burby and the other five publishers were anything but veterans, all having been released from their apprenticeships within the previous eight years. Richard Bankworth (freed 1589) was just setting up his new bookselling business. The slightly more seasoned bookseller Richard Blackwall (freed in 1586) had just acquired a new shop near Guildhall Gate when he published his first title in 1594. The bookseller Thomas Millington (freed 1591) also entered his first publication in 1594, and William Jones (freed 1587) issued only his second publication in that year. Peter Short (freed 1589), probably one of the more experienced publishers of the younger cohort, had copublished ten editions, although only one title on his own by 1594.

While they were young stationers, none of these eight was a novice. The apprenticeship for stationers typically lasted seven years, and no apprentice could become a "freeman" before the age of twenty-four. Still, Creede and others like him were a recognized class of stationers whose businesses were lacking capital. In 1597, for instance, Creede was considered one of the "youngemen" of the Stationers' Company when he applied for and received a loan of five pounds (Greg and Boswell 1930, 57–8). At the time, Creede had already taken on his own apprentice, suggesting that his printing house was profiting, but coin was needed to build the business (Yamada 1994, 3). Publishing professional plays would not have made the young stationer rich, but the length and format of playbooks made them attractive investments for stationers seeking to establish their wares in the market. As Holger Schott Syme has shown, publishers like Creede and Burby started out in the trade publishing books in small formats because they cost less to produce than large-format volumes. Syme proposes that "playbooks may have been the hallmark of the beginner and the small-timer in the publishing business" (2013, 44). In this context then, the theater companies may have simply sold their manuscripts to those stationers who were most receptive to publishing small-format books.

The results of this publishing experiment were mixed for those stationers involved. Of the seventeen professional plays published as first editions in 1594, eight reached reprints within ten years. Burby's playbook publications were rather lucrative. Of the eight different titles that he published in the 1590s, three were reprinted during the decade, including two of those published in 1594. Burby even hired Creede to print the second quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1599), but the bookseller did not return to dramatic publication again, which appears to have been a smart move considering that his later investments in large formats made him a wealthy man, as his last will and testament demonstrates (Syme 2013, 46; Johnson 1992a, 71–2). Thomas Millington and William Jones also enjoyed the profits of a second edition from their 1594 investments. Creede, however, was likely disappointed. Only one of his playbooks merited a second edition before 1600, although he made money printing plays for other publishers for the rest of his career: upward of forty different playbook editions were manufactured in his printing house. The stationers participating in the “boomlet” surely increased the visibility of playbooks in London bookstalls and helped establish professional drama as a class of books with early modern readers. Still, the playbook market did not “take off” until after 1598 when new plays were published in much larger numbers, and likely so because stationers saw that professional plays were returning investments with second and third editions (Farmer and Lesser 2005, 9–10).

1600–1609: Waterson and Blount

By the turn of the century, the professional playbook had arrived. From 1600 to 1609, a record number of single-play editions of professional drama (ninety-five first editions, thirty-seven second-plus editions) entered the market, constituting 75.9 percent of the total editions of drama published during the decade. It may be surprising, then, to note that the stationers who published the most editions from 1600 to 1609 – Simon Waterson and Edward Blount (twelve editions each) – invested mostly in nonprofessional plays. Their creative use of book formats speaks to their desires to offer their customers both variety and flexibility in their purchases.

A London bookseller, Simon Waterson began a remarkable run of editions of Samuel Daniel's works, starting in 1585 and continuing until the stationer's death in 1635. As Daniel added more titles to his corpus, Waterson published them, ordering that dramatic texts be printed both in collections and as individual playbooks in various dimensions. For instance, in 1601, he published Daniel's *Works* in folio, which contained the author's closet play *Cleopatra* among other titles. In 1605, Waterson published Daniel's *Certain Small Poems* in the small octavo format; among the author's poetry and prose, it included both *Cleopatra* and the professional play *Philotas*, the latter of which Waterson issued in its own individual octavo playbook in the same year. In 1607, he issued *Certain Small Works* also in octavo, and to the other plays, poems, and prose works, he added the university play *The Queen's Arcadia*, which had been printed as its own quarto playbook in 1606. By 1610, Waterson had made Daniel's many different titles available to readers in five different formats – duodecimo, sixteenmo, octavo, quarto, and folio – and in variously sized collections and single editions. As Daniel's oeuvre expanded, it appears that Waterson chose new sizes and varied the contents of the collections to encourage customers to buy the new and improved volumes. The title-page of the 1601 folio, for instance, promised that it was “Newly augmented,” and the title-page of the 1607 octavo guaranteed that the volume was “now

again by him *corrected and augmented*.” Waterson appears to have been especially adept at selling old and new books together by simply redesigning the packaging.

Edward Blount was likely influenced by Waterson’s design strategies, although Blount appears to have chosen book formats so that plays could be marketed with other printed texts selling in his bookshop. A London bookseller from 1594 to 1632, Blount is better known by scholars today as one of the publishers of Shakespeare’s First Folio (1623). The bookseller’s “unparalleled gift for recognizing new works that would eventually become classics” is also demonstrated by his publication of Montaigne’s *Essays*, Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, and Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (Taylor 2008, 297–8). Blount’s dramatic publications were more diverse than Waterson’s in the early 1600s. Five of the editions that Blount published in the decade were single-play editions, including Daniel’s *Philotas* (1605), copublished with Waterson. The rest of the stationer’s dramatic publications were in collections, although select titles were also issued independently.

Because many books were sold to customers without bindings, readers could choose a selection of texts and pay a binder to secure them with the customer’s choice of covering. Thus, Blount often formatted editions to make them amenable to compilation. In 1603, for example, he published Daniel’s *Panegyric Congratulatory* (1603) in two formats, octavo and folio. The former could be easily appended to Daniel’s *Delia and Rosamond Augmented {with} Cleopatra* (1595) in octavo, and the latter easily annexed to Daniel’s *Works* (1601) in folio, for both of these collections published by Waterson were missing the latest in Daniel’s oeuvre.

Blount’s publications of Sir William Alexander’s works reveal a similar strategy but with many more texts. In April 1604, the publisher entered in the Stationers’ Register “A booke Called the Woorkes of Wylliam Alexander of Menstrie Conteyning the Monarchicke Tragedies Paranethis [Paraenesis] to the Prince. and Aurora” (Arber 1875–94, 3: 260). Blount only paid sixpence for entering all of these titles, but he issued each of the parts in quarto as separate books, thereby decreasing the upfront investment per title. If customers wanted Alexander’s closet dramas, they could choose *Darius*, which was printed with its own separate title page, or *Cræsus* and *Darius* together under the general title-page announcing *The Monarchic Tragedies* (1604). Blount could also have encouraged readers to purchase the tragedies with the other recently published editions of Alexander’s poetry – *Aurora* (1604) and *A Paraenesis to the Prince* (1604). Or the stationer might have sold all of the titles sewn together as a prepackaged collection. In 1607, Blount made such a compilation even more appealing as he reissued *Cræsus* and *Darius* with two more of Alexander’s tragedies, *Julius Caesar* and *The Alexandrian Tragedy*. Book buyers could purchase just the plays or add editions of Alexander’s poems to their volumes. Evidence suggests that this particular combination was an attractive product for at least one reader, as a copy of the four-play *Monarchic Tragedies* (1607) survives bound in a seventeenth-century *Sammelband* with copies of *A Paraenesis* (1604) and *Aurora* (1604).⁷

Blount’s designs offered readers flexibility in their purchases, but his decision to issue a single author’s works in individual editions also can be seen as a precautionary measure. It appears that he was uncertain about the profitability of selling Alexander’s works in a collected edition. If customers failed to buy the complete volume, Blount’s entire investment would have been lost. Yet, by issuing individual titles over time and in sets, he could entice readers with just one or two works and then hopefully lure them back to the bookshops for more. This marketing tactic was not limited to closet and occasional dramas in the period but informed one of the most famous collection projects of the seventeenth century: a series of nine playbooks published in 1619 by the publisher Thomas Pavier.

1610 to 1619: Thomas Pavier

The stationer with the highest number of dramatic publications from 1610 to 1619 was Thomas Pavier, London bookseller from 1600 to 1625.⁸ A well-respected member of the Stationers' Company, Pavier primarily invested in religious texts but was also apt to publish playbooks, ballads, newsbooks, and histories (Johnson 1992b, 12). As I argue elsewhere (Lyons 2012), his dramatic publications from 1600 to 1608 reveal that he was investing in professional plays that had been performed as parts in series on London stages (*Henry the Fifth*, *1 Sir John Oldcastle*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *1 Jeronimo*, and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*), as well as plays based on historical figures (*Henry the Fifth*, *1 Sir John Oldcastle*, *Jack Straw*, *Captain Thomas Stukeley*). When Pavier hired William Jaggard in 1619 to print the nine quartos – eight of which were attributed to Shakespeare on their title-pages and some with false imprints – the stationers seemed to be planning a collected edition, as three plays, *2&3 Henry VI* and *Pericles*, were printed together with continuous signatures. Nevertheless, extant editions show that the collected edition was aborted early in the printing process, for the remaining titles – *Henry the Fifth*, *1 Sir John Oldcastle*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Lear*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – were printed as independent quartos with separate signatures. Customers still had the option to gather the playbooks or buy prepackaged collections from stationers, and some apparently did just that, as there are several extant compilations containing these nine quartos (Knight 2009, 323–6). Considering that William Jaggard printed the plays and that Jaggard and his son, Isaac, printed the Shakespeare First Folio in 1623, scholars have inferred that Shakespeare's authorship was the stationers' primary motivation for producing the quartos. Sonia Massai, for example, argues that Pavier published the plays as a nonce collection to gauge consumers' interest in Shakespeare and simultaneously to incite demand for more of the author's works in preparation for the expensive Folio enterprise (2007, 118).

However, Pavier's decision to publish the plays individually instead of in a collected edition mirrors Blount's approach to Alexander's tragedies in the previous decade. Indeed, Pavier appears to have had doubts about whether the quartos would sell well together with "Shakespeare" as its unifying principle (Lyons 2012, 201–3). That four of the 1619 quartos were marketed explicitly as "histories" on their title-pages, and that Pavier offered many books labeled "histories" in his portfolio, suggest that the plays could be marketed individually or in sets based on their other features. For instance, *The Whole Contention betweene the two Famous Houses (2 & 3 Henry VI)* may have attracted the same readers purchasing *The cronicle history of Henry the Fifth*, which had no authorial attribution on its title-page. Or, it could be sold with other explicitly labeled "histories," such as *True Chronicle History of the life and death of King Lear*, *The first part Of the true & honorable history of the Life of Sir John Old-castle*, or *The Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice*. Pavier could also have recommended pairing plays with their prose and verse offshoots, some of which he published himself, including *The Hystorie of Titana and Theseus* (1608), a prose narrative exploring the classical figures in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Or perhaps he could have sold the ballad *A new song, shewing the crueltie of Gernatus a Jew, who lending to a marchant a hundred crownes would have a pound of his flesh* (1620), with *The Merchant of Venice*, a play with a strikingly similar plot. For Pavier then, "Shakespeare" appears to have been just one of many collection principles that were employed to make multitext sales in his shop.

For the Jaggards as well, an assemblage of quartos based on Shakespeare's authorship may not have been marketable. An extant *Sammelband* at the Folger Shakespeare Library currently

binds together the nine Pavier quartos in a seventeenth-century binding, but it once also contained Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1617) (Knight 2009, 326). Heywood's play had been printed by William Jaggard in 1607 and was reprinted by Isaac in 1617. Because all ten quartos were produced in the Jaggards' printing house, the Folger *Sammelband* may have been assembled in their shop, perhaps by a reader or by the stationers themselves (Lyons 2012, 203).⁹ For one of the quartos' early compilers, other collection principles were apparently more appealing.

1620–1629: The Folio Syndicate, George Eld, and Nicholas Okes

Compared to the previous decade, the 1620s saw the number of dramatic editions decrease. Publishers introduced to readers about the same number of professional plays as in the 1610s, but the number of nonprofessional plays decreased by nearly half. The 1620s also witnessed changes in publishers' formatting of professional drama. More professional plays were printed in collected editions than in the previous four decades combined, and almost half (45.9 percent) of the total drama published from 1620 to 1629 was in some form of publisher-issued collection. A significant proportion of these plays were gathered in Shakespeare's *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (1623). Assembling thirty-six professional plays under one title-page, the First Folio became the largest collection of professional drama in England, and the texts in this one book represented more than a quarter of the drama published throughout the entire decade.¹⁰ The sheer size of this collection and the syndicate of stationers responsible for its publication had lasting effects on the material presentation of professional plays for decades to come.

The Folio's production exposes the challenges that stationers faced when acquiring permission to publish collections of previously printed drama. Without Edward Blount and Isaac Jaggard's negotiation skills, the volume would have either contained half as many plays or failed to materialize at all. Blount and Jaggard appear to have steered the project, for it was they who jointly entered in the Stationers' Register sixteen new plays in November 1623, paying seven shillings to record their ownership (Blayney 1991, 20). The rights to print the other twenty Shakespeare plays were scattered among seven different stationers. William Aspley and John Smethwick did not lease or sell their rights, but instead became shareholders in the folio project, as their names appear with Blount and the Jaggards in the colophon. The other stationers, Arthur Johnson, Matthew Law, Thomas Pavier, Thomas Walkley, and Henry Walley, apparently negotiated terms that allowed Blount and Jaggard to reprint their Shakespeare plays in 1623, although Walley seems to have held out longer than the rest. His reluctance to lease *Troilus and Cressida* manifests itself on extant editions of the First Folio. For example, on the "Catalogue" page, the titles of thirty-five plays appear, but *Troilus and Cressida* is absent, suggesting that when the prefatory materials went to press, Blount and Jaggard had yet to strike a bargain with Walley. Furthermore, Blayney claims that issues of the Folio were sold to customers *sans Troilus*, the play only later being added to unsold copies once Walley's conditions had been met (1991, 24). Once the text was available, the publishers had to decide whether it should be appended to the end of the collection or inserted in the middle, eventually deciding to place *Troilus and Cressida* at the beginning of the Tragedies. A Prologue page to the play was later added as well, meaning that issues of the Folio were sold to customers in three states, copies without *Troilus*, with *Troilus*, and with *Troilus* and the Prologue to the play. As this example clearly demonstrates, Shakespeare's folio was "complete" only insofar as it contained all of the plays for which Blount and Jaggard could procure the rights to print.

Two years before the First Folio appeared in print, another single-author drama collection was published, Thomas Middleton's *Honorable Entertainments* (1621). Compared to the Folio, the Middleton collection was an easy enterprise for its publisher, George Eld. Only he held the rights to copy the entertainments, and all had been written and recently performed between 1620 and 1621 for two different Lord Mayors of London. Because Eld printed the edition from his own press, he involved no other stationer in the book's production until distribution. He had no need for investment partners either because the ten entertainments were printed in the octavo format and thus required only four sheets of paper per copy. For comparison, a single quarto playbook required nine sheets on average while one copy of the Shakespeare Folio used approximately 227 sheets. Typically, shorter books in smaller formats involved less risk, but they also produced lower profit margins; large-format books were high-risk, higher profit – if they sold well. Because of its size, a project like the Middleton octavo was far less risky than Blount and Jaggard's folio. That Blount was a bookseller and Eld a printer may have meant that the former had more capital to invest in a collection project in the 1620s, but evidence of Blount's near bankruptcy in the years following the First Folio is a useful reminder that sometimes books did not pay the speculator, or at least not quickly enough (Kastan 2001, 61–3; Kiséry 2012, 369). By the time the second Shakespeare Folio was printed in 1632, both Blount and Jaggard were dead, although the latter's widow, Dorothy Jaggard, was able to cash in on "her parte in Shacksphere playes" in 1627 when she sold them to Thomas and Richard Cotes (Arber 1875–94, 4: 182). Eld's collection was not reprinted, but it is unlikely that he anticipated a second edition.

The case of the publisher Nicholas Okes reminds us that reprint rates do not always reliably indicate success with certain kinds and formats of printed drama.¹¹ Besides the stationers who invested in multitext collections, the single stationer with the most published editions of drama in the 1620s was Okes (nine total). Printer from 1606 to 1645, his dramatic investments reveal his preference for publishing short works. As Blayney has shown, Okes's press was the place to print small books of ephemera. He produced them quickly, albeit not with the highest level of workmanship (1982, 52). Like Eld, Okes could cheaply manufacture entertainments from his own press. Indeed, of the twenty-eight dramatic texts that Okes published throughout his career, seventeen were civic pageants that ranged from one to five sheets, with the majority only requiring three. None of these entertainments was reprinted in the period, but like the newsbooks making a splash in the 1620s (and rarely reprinted because of their topical content), Okes's pageant pamphlets appear to have been in high demand, for he issued them regularly from 1612 to 1633. Like newsbooks, typically two to three sheets long, the pageant-books provided timely reports of recent festivities and were all printed near the time of their performance. Because of the frequency of Okes's investments in topical dramas and the economics of his format choices, first edition pageant-books appear to have been a low-risk investment with small but reliable returns in the 1620s. In fact, some of the pageants printed by Okes may have been no-risk publications, their printing costs paid for by the London companies sponsoring the pageantry (Weiss 2007, 198). In 1617, for instance, the Grocers' Company paid Okes £4 to print five hundred copies of *The Triumphs of Honor and Industry* (1617).

1630s: William Cooke, Andrew Croke, and Richard Meighen

The 1630s was an unprecedented decade for dramatic publication. From 1630 to 1639, 306 editions of drama were published. These numbers indicate that the market for drama was flourishing. Most of these plays were professional (69.9 percent), but the number of nonprofessional dramatic

texts more than doubled from the decade before. The professional plays that were selling and meriting reprints during this decade, however, were not new plays but older ones, those first performed from roughly 1590 to 1610 (Farmer and Lesser 2006, 30). What Farmer and Lesser find, in fact, is that publishers in this period were divided into two groups, those publishing new plays and those publishing the tried-and-true “classics” (35). Evidence of this bifurcation is evident in the publishing records of William Cooke, Andrew Croke, and Richard Meighen, publishers who invested in the most single-play editions in the 1630s.

William Cooke, bookseller in London from 1632 to 1642, was heavily invested in new professional plays. From 1630 to 1640, he published twenty-one first editions, twelve of which were copublished with his associate Andrew Croke. Only one dramatic title merited a reprint for Cooke, and it was the Inns of Court masque *Triumph of Peace* (1633) by James Shirley. Andrew Croke likewise started his career as a bookseller in 1632, although he outlasted Cooke by another thirty-two years. Croke published sixteen single-play quartos from 1630 to 1640, fifteen of which were professional, with one university play. Among these sixteen playbooks were the twelve first editions copublished with Cooke and another four first edition plays published on his own. Both Cooke and Croke specialized in the plays of James Shirley, but Croke also issued works by Henry Killigrew and Robert Chamberlain, who, like Shirley, were active playwrights in the 1630s. All of Croke’s dramatic investments were in new plays, but none reached a reprint before 1660, affirming Farmer and Lesser’s theory of the bifurcation of the playbook market.

The publishing record of Richard Meighen, bookseller from 1614 to 1642, shows that he invested in “classic” plays from the professional theaters, although not to the exclusion of more recent nonprofessional drama. Meighen’s investments in the 1630s consisted of thirteen editions of drama. Five of these were previously printed professional plays performed in London between 1597 and 1608, texts by Shakespeare, Middleton, and John Fletcher. When Meighen became one of five shareholders in Shakespeare’s *Second Folio* (1632), he demonstrated an even stronger commitment to investing in old plays. When publishing nonprofessional drama, however, Meighen used a different strategy. He chose to publish titles that had been recently performed and/or previously unpublished. For instance, in the 1630s, Meighen published four first-edition university plays, as well as a masque by William Davenant in 1635, published around the date of its performance. Moreover, Meighen with Thomas Walkley copublished the second and third volumes of Jonson’s *Works* (1640), which included seventeen newly printed nonprofessional dramas, all performed between 1616 and 1637. When we expand our analysis of Meighen’s investments to nonprofessional plays and collections, Meighen appears to have diversified his dramatic output, offering single-play playbooks and collections as well as nonprofessional and professional editions. Ultimately, his publications encapsulate both the diversity of dramatic genres and formats available to publishers and readers at the time, as well as the individual and collaborative roles a publisher might play when putting them into print.

Conclusion

By focusing on those stationers publishing large numbers of editions of drama in each decade, we have bypassed many who published drama over longer periods of time as well as others who were more profitable in dramatic publication or even more influential in developing the market for plays. A study of publishers based on numbers of new “titles” or even “books” of drama would

surely yield different results, and the inclusion of publishers from Dublin and Edinburgh would offer an even broader context for understanding the British trade in drama as a whole.

The aim of this chapter has not been to construct a hierarchy of publishers based on their output in play editions, but to present a diverse sample of the kinds and formats of drama that publishers produced in this sixty-year period. That the publishers with the highest number of editions in each decade from 1580 to 1640 illustrate this multiplicity speaks to the fact that trends in drama were changing over time. As new kinds of drama were emerging in the playhouses, at Court, and in the streets of London, new material formats were being developed to fashion them into attractive, vendible books. These tasks fell largely to the publishers in the period, and the complexity and creativity of their labors in the book trade promise to offer both scholars and students much more to explore in years to come.

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, the data on dramatic publication in this essay are derived from the Database of Early English Playbooks (DEEP) (Farmer and Lesser 2007), which contains records for 1,002 editions of extant drama published in England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1580 to 1640. First editions, reprints, and plays in collections are included in this number. My focus on “editions” (rather than “books” or “titles”) places emphasis on each printing or impression of a play. For instance, a collection like Shakespeare’s First Folio (1623) containing thirty-six distinct plays is counted not as one “book” or “title” but as thirty-six “editions.” Because this study focuses on publishers in England, I have excluded agents working in Dublin and Edinburgh as well as eight editions of drama printed in these cities, leaving us with 207 publishers of 994 editions from 1580 to 1640. The breakdown of drama published in England per decade is as follows: 33 editions from 1580 to 1589; 107 editions from 1590 to 1599; 174 editions from 1600 to 1609; 169 editions from 1610 to 1619; 133 editions from 1620 to 1629; 306 editions from 1630 to 1639; and 72 editions in single year 1640.
- 2 For a breakdown of publications by subject, see Farmer and Lesser (2013).
- 3 The data on publishers of drama must be understood as rough estimates based on DEEP and available documents, such as Greg (1939-59). The Index of Printers and Publishers in Pollard and Redgrave’s *Short-Title Catalogue* (1976-91) lists 1,367 stationers working in the English book trade from 1475 to 1640, although there were surely more whose names are not recorded in the archives, including many women working alongside men in the trade (Smith 2012, 100).
- 4 Blayney cites nine editions of *Mucedorus*, but in 2002, another edition of the play was discovered (see Proudfoot 2002), thus bringing the edition count to ten editions in twenty-one years. I want to thank Zachary Lesser for calling my attention to this edition.
- 5 The average reprint rate within twenty years for all speculative publications was 18.1 percent and 39.9 percent for professional plays from 1576 to 1625 (Farmer and Lesser 2006, 19). The reprint rate for nonprofessional drama from 1576 to 1625 was 18.4 percent (Lesser 2011, 532).
- 6 Because 2 *Troublesome Reign* appeared both in collection and as a bibliographically independent quarto (DEEP), I have counted 1&2 *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (1591) as two play editions.
- 7 See the copy in the Victoria and Albert Museum’s National Art Library, Dyce 9523 (25.E.42). This *Sammelband* is in a plain mottled calf seventeenth-century binding.

- 8 Arguably, William Stansby was the largest investor in drama from 1610 to 1619, although he was not alone in the venture. As scholars have shown, Jonson's *Works* (1616) required the cooperation of a large number of stationers, including Stansby, Edward Blount, John Smethwick, Mathew Law, Richard Bonian, Henry Walley, Thomas Thorpe, and Walter Burre (Bland 1998, 16–18; Gants 1998, 129).
- 9 See STC 26101 copy 2 at the Folger Shakespeare Library.
- 10 For discussion on Shakespeare and the book, see Murphy (2010), Erne (2013), and Hooks (2013)
- 11 For more on the challenges of using reprint rates to determine success, see Farmer and Lesser (2006, 21–2, 27–8).

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Sidney, Cary, Cavendish: Playwrights of the Printed Page and a Future Stage

Lara Dodds and Margaret Ferguson

Thirty years ago, the three well-educated and socially privileged women named in our title would not have been grouped together as playwrights in a companion to English Renaissance drama. Although each might have been mentioned separately as a minor contributor to the emergent nation's dramatic culture, the conditions did not yet exist for examining them together as writers linked not only by their gender and social status, but also by their concern with political tyranny and with related questions about the legitimacy of speech by females and others in a subject position in a monarchy. The fact that each of them entered the public sphere through print in an era when that medium was regarded in England as potentially dangerous to female chastity is another thread that links them despite their many differences. They can also be fruitfully considered as a group in the context of this volume because their plays – one each by Mary Sidney and Elizabeth Cary, twenty-five by Margaret Cavendish – raise significant questions about how modern students of drama might interpret the relation between legible and performable play texts if we set aside the idea that we can know what female authors from the past envisioned as the future of their plays.

Earlier studies have linked these writers as authors of “closet drama” but we have eschewed this phrase because it is anachronistic (it was coined in the nineteenth century to describe plays clearly not intended for embodied performance), and because it conjures up an intimate, private space that has strong associations with female sexuality in Renaissance drama: think of Gertrude's closet or the one where Beatrice-Joanna dies in *The Changeling*. Although critics have made good cases for retaining the category term (Raber 2001; Straznicki 2004; Ballaster 1996; Wynne-Davies 2010), we think that it closes down interpretive possibilities. The plays analyzed here were not performed in commercial theaters during their authors' lifetimes, but that does not mean that the authors didn't intend them for performance or collective reading in great houses, Courts, or public spaces that existed outside of England – or in the writer's imagination. Cavendish created miniature plays in a utopian “convent of pleasure”; Cary provided stage directions for a slyly

comical sword fight in her *Tragedy of Mariam*; and Sidney translated a play that had been performed with male and female actors on a French stage (Norland 2009, 194). We should not confuse the unperformed with the unperformable. As applied to a play such as Cary's, which was successfully acted by the Tinderbox Theatre Company in 1994 in a production directed and described by Stephanie J. Hodgson-Wright, the phrase "closet drama" may suggest a simpler relation between public and private cultural domains – and between modes of communication and transmission of dramatic materials across political and linguistic boundaries – than in fact obtained in early modern Europe (Findlay, Williams, and Hodgson-Wright 1999; Findlay 2006).¹

The backgrounds of these writers reveal both the shared ground of female authorship in early modern England and the variety of routes taken by individual writers. Mary Sidney (1561–1621) was a patron of drama, as was her husband, the Earl of Pembroke; her translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (1592) is the first English dramatic version of Plutarch's famous story of love and empire. Sidney's translation influenced Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* of 1607 as well as a number of other plays that use ancient history to comment on contemporary English politics and, more significantly, to draw moral connections between past and present.² Among Sidney's followers was Samuel Daniel, who described his *Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) as a companion to Sidney's play in his dedicatory poem praising her for inspiring him to "sing of state" (sig. H5, l. 8).

Elizabeth Cary (c.1585–1639) was one of the writers indebted to Sidney's example. In her *Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), the heroine claims that her husband, Herod, found her more "fair" than Cleopatra, and Herod, a tyrant to his subordinates, was appointed to rule the Roman colony of Judea by Mark Antony. The protagonists of Sidney's tragedy hover in the margins of Cary's, providing telling parallels to and contrasts with her major characters. The story of Herod's murder of Mariam was popular among Continental dramatists of the sixteenth century (Valency 1940; Cary [1613] 1994, 23–6), but Cary was the first to present the drama in English, with plot twists and allegorical meanings absent in the previous versions. *Mariam* is sometimes lauded as the first original play by an Englishwoman, but, despite the possibility that it may have influenced Shakespeare's *Othello* when it circulated in manuscript,³ the play, reprinted in facsimile by the Malone Society in 1914, remained largely forgotten until the 1990s when renewed interest in early modern women's writing made it a quasi-canonical text in some university courses (Cary [1613] 1992). For its complex exploration of conscience, martyrdom, tyranny, and conflicts caused by differences in blood lines, gender, and political allegiance, *Mariam* is now recognized as a significant contribution to English tragedy (Kelly 2007; Shell 2007; Weller 2000).

In contrast to Sidney and Cary, Margaret Cavendish (1623–73) was a prolific dramatist who authored two volumes of plays in folio: *Playes* (1662) was written while Cavendish was in Paris and Antwerp with other exiled Royalists before the Restoration, and *Plays, Never before Printed* (1668) after the family returned to England. In the several prefatory letters and poems in these volumes, Cavendish also offered a critical and historical perspective on the drama of England, a nation that had been torn by civil war and by the beheading of a monarch, Charles I, who was viewed both as an unjust tyrant and as a noble martyr. Her dramatic oeuvre represents the most important body of work by a female dramatist before Aphra Behn, who wrote, in striking contrast to Cavendish, Cary, and Sidney, in order to earn a living through the commercial theater and through print. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Cavendish read Cary or Sidney; however, her works demonstrate a deep familiarity with the dramatic tradition stretching back to Shakespeare and Jonson. Her plays rework the significant dramatic genres of the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline eras, especially comedy and tragicomedy, by increasing the number of female roles and by placing women's voices at the center of her "play-worlds" (Pearson 1985, 33).

While their membership in privileged families enabled Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish to write, it also worked to constrain their choice of genres and ways of reaching a public readership. In the decades since J. P. Saunders (1951) identified a “stigma of print” in Tudor England, a rich body of scholarship has grown up around the effects that gender and rank had on practices of publishing one’s writings via manuscript or print during the early modern era (Wall 1993; 2000, 36–41; Love 1993). We need more scholarly inquiry that considers theatrical performances in great houses, a mode of publication that was available to elite women who did not publish through the medium of print. Concepts of authorship were inflected not only by gender and social status but also by religious belief. Sidney and Cary, who were well-read in the theological disputes of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation as well as in classical and medieval literary traditions, were acutely aware that the humanist goal of literary fame, rooted in a classical ethos of competition, stood in considerable tension with both Protestant and Roman Catholic tenets about humility, selfhood, and the afterlife. The tension was even more acute for aspiring women writers than it was for men, because the notion of literary fame (or “glory”) was antithetical to the maintenance of the “good name” connected to the cultural ideal of the wife as the husband’s property, “chaste, silent, and obedient” (Hull 1982; Jones 1986, 75–95). As the Chorus – a voice of “doxa” or common opinion – explains in Cary’s *Mariam*, a wife who seeks “to be by public language grac’d” will wound her “fame” in the paradoxical sense that word carried when it applied to females;⁴ for them, fame ostensibly denoted the specifically “private” virtue of chastity – or at least a perfectly maintained appearance thereof.

Of these three women, Cavendish was the least concerned with theological issues and sought fame most openly, yet her anxious self-fashioning in numerous prefatory poems and letters provides a stark portrait of the costs of such a desire. In fact, Cavendish explicitly articulates the challenges of female publicity by citing the travails of an earlier woman writer. She fears that her readers will identify her with the “Lady who wrote the Romancy,” and tell her “Work Lady, Work, let writing Books alone / For surely wiser Women nere wrote one” (Cavendish 1653, sig. A3v). The lady is Mary Wroth, who was the target of a scurrilous and sexualized poetic detraction upon the publication of *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (1621). Cavendish evidently quotes the male-authored poem in order to distance herself from her predecessor, but the fact that she does quote it implicitly acknowledges the challenging conditions of early modern women’s authorship. As the writers discussed here sought to negotiate the complex and often competing value systems given to them by their education, social status, and gender, they yoked questions about constraints on female public speech to questions about the liberty of those in subject positions who can imagine themselves as educators of monarchs or even as good monarchs in their own right.

To educate or to rule others, one needs the power of speech. The women studied in this chapter represent female characters who exercise this power, making its representation a “potent tool,” as Marion Wynne-Davies argues in a discussion of Sidney, for “challenging preconceptions and undermining social and political practice” (2010, 185). These playwrights, however, offer complex statements about their culture’s dominant ideological link between female chastity, obedience, and silence: that triad becomes a major theme in Sidney’s and Cary’s plays, and in many of Cavendish’s as well. It also exerts ideological pressure on these writers’ efforts to fashion authorial personae compatible with their social status and gender. The pressure colors, albeit in different shades, their reflections on two related questions: what constitutes proper behavior for a male monarch (or his domestic analogue, a husband); and what constitutes proper behavior for a political subject, female or male, who may harbor serious doubts, as Elizabeth Cary and Mary Sidney did, about their monarch’s governance of the English body politic – or who may think, as

Cavendish did, that because women are not “Citizens of the Commonwealth,” they are therefore not “Subjects of the Commonwealth” (Cavendish [1664] 2004, 61), and should be free to become monarchs of a country of their own imagining? The works considered in this chapter show how women used drama to represent, comment upon, and rewrite early modern political forms.

Mary Sidney

Mary Sidney belonged to a prominent family alliance that controlled “approximately two-thirds of the land under Elizabeth’s rule” (Hannay 1985, 153). Sidney added luster to her family by marrying the immensely wealthy and much older Henry Herbert, owner of Wilton House, among other properties (Beilin 1987, 124; Hannay 1990). For a long time, Sidney, who kept her birth family’s coat of arms even after her marriage, was best known to literary history for her role in the creation of her brother Philip’s literary reputation. After his death, she supervised the publication of his *Arcadia* and completed the metrical translation of the Psalms that he had begun. More recently, however, critics have recognized the scope and independence of Sidney’s literary project. Her most significant contribution to English drama is her translation of *Marc Antoine*, but she repeatedly drew on the resources of drama in her other works as well. Katherine Larson shows that her translations of the Psalms (Philip finished only 43 of the 150 in the sequence) use dramatic, or “conversational,” techniques in order to construct “poetic and political authority” (2011, 64). Similarly, her short dramatic poem “A Dialogue between two shepherds, Thenot and Piers, in praise of Astrea” (c.1599), written to entertain the Queen during a planned visit to the Pembroke estate at Wilton, is more than a conventional pastoral poem of praise. Sidney uses the cover of drama’s multiple voices to explore political and theological problems. A master of “admonitory flattery” (Hannay 1985; 1990, 126), Sidney sought to speak truth to power without getting punished for her act. In *Antonius* and the “Dialogue,” she focuses critical attention on the ruler’s temptation to become an “idol” in his or her own eyes as well as in those of some of his gullible subjects.

The aristocratic female translator’s married name is prominently (and unusually) displayed on the title-page of the first edition of Sidney’s play, which reads: “*Discourse of Life and Death* Written in French by Ph. Mornay. *Antonius* A Tragedie written also in French by Ro. Garnier. Both done in English by the Countesse of Pembroke” (1592). A second edition, without de Mornay’s text, was brought out by the same publisher, William Ponsonby, in 1595. Sidney based her translation on the 1585 text of *Marc Antoine* (first published in 1578), which was “known to have been substantially revised by the author, who was still living when she began her translation” (Herbert 1998, 147). Garnier had been a loyal servant of the French monarchy and its system of justice, but his disillusionment during the French civil wars led him to join the League, a group of Catholics extremely opposed to the monarchy. He died in 1590, poor and in political disgrace (Garnier 1975, introduction; Jondorf 1969). Written during the civil wars, *Marc Antoine* reflects on this political strife: it included a dedication lamenting the parallels between “the civil wars of Rome” and “our domestic dissensions” (cited in Herbert 1998, 39, authors’ translation).

Why did Sidney choose to render into English a play by this French Catholic? Why, in particular, did she choose, from several plays on Roman historical themes by Garnier, one about two royal personages who lost their political power, harmed their subjects, disinherited their children, and committed suicide for the sake of love? Critics have offered different answers to this question, accompanying radically contrasting judgments of the play’s qualities both as a translation and as an influence on the development of English drama. One traditional answer to

this question has been to read *Antonius* as a response to Philip Sidney's critique of English drama in *The Apology for Poetry*. Philip Sidney viewed English drama as lacking the "stately speeches and well sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style" (1970, 75). As Deborah Uman observes, Mary Sidney chose a play that "satisfies the theory of drama praised by her brother," which has led some critics to see her choice as an "homage to her brother" and her literary legacy as "significantly restricted by the absent presence of her brother" (2012, 81). Recent theorizations of translation, however, trouble efforts to distinguish sharply between "faithful" and "free" renditions, as well as between authors, imitators, and translators. The translator's role involves projecting a persona as well as constantly making small decisions about figurative language; Uman argues that Sidney's apparent deference to male authority figures in her literary activities provides the occasion for a demonstration of poetic skill, opening the possibility "that the female object will speak back" – to the original author and to her readers – "in the voice and body of a female translator and dramatist" (88).

It is fruitful, therefore, to attend to the political as well as the literary or aesthetic dimensions of Sidney's decision to translate a play of the subgenre usually described as neo-Senecan closet drama. Plays in this New Senecan tradition typically share several formal features: they observe the Aristotelian unities of time and of action and the "unity of place," although this latter rule was first formulated not in antiquity but rather in Renaissance Italy, by Lodovico Castelvetro (Sidney 1970, 74–5n.). Such plays have five acts divided by meditations of the Chorus; their major characters deliver long soliloquies "alternating with dialogues between a protagonist and a minor character" (Herbert 1998, 141), but the protagonists themselves do not speak to each other; they include a *nuntius* or messenger to report action that occurs offstage, and sometimes a "rhetor," who characteristically comments on the meaning of events. Most importantly, however, plays in this Senecan tradition draw on Stoic doctrines to explore psychological conflicts that have serious political causes and effects. The significance of the political potential of this genre is evidenced by the set of eleven plays classified by literary historians as "neo-Senecan" or (more recently) as "Sidnean" closet drama (see Straznicky 1998). Through its focus on the individual's achievement of self-control, the neo-Senecan form allowed for discreet commentary on the exercise of sovereignty and the possibilities of resistance.

In Sidney's translation of Garnier's play, both protagonists are faced with the central stoic dilemma of self-mastery. Notably, Antony fails this test. The play begins with Antony berating Cleopatra for fleeing with her boats from the battle of Actium. Assuming that she deserted him because she sought to please Caesar and thus save her own crown, Antony rehearses misogynist stereotypes to avoid blaming himself in any way for his plight (he lost the battle spectacularly by following her rather than fighting). First attributing his downfall to "the cruell Heav'ns" (l. 2) and then to Cleopatra – she "only hast me vanquish" (l. 34) – Antony describes the Egyptian queen as a sorceress whose "poisoned cuppes" spoiled his reason.⁵ He pities himself, moreover, in the repeated phrase "Poore Antonie," as the feminized slave of a cruel, perjuring, traitorous woman (ll. 18–20) whose dangerous "Eastern" sexuality makes her resemble Marlowe's character of Zenocrate in *Tamburlaine*; both female characters are described as whores (Wynne-Davies 2010, 189). Antony's view of things does not, however, go uncontested. A Chorus representing the perspective of the Egyptian people on the acts performed by the "great ones" remarks, at the end of Act 1, that "Nature made us not free / When first she made us live" (ll. 175–6). Thus countering Antony's view of himself as enslaved by Cleopatra, the Chorus introduces an idea central to Stoic ethics: the wise man should direct his desires "inward toward those things that are strictly within his own control" (Straznicky 1994, 115).

By contrast, Cleopatra acknowledges her error and seeks to regain dignity in defeat. She questions how she could have “betraide my Lord, my King” (2.396). Her description of their failure is directed toward self rather than other: “I am sole cause: I did it, only I” (2.455). The long monologues characteristic of neo-Senecan drama, however, invite nuanced reflections on the mysteries of intention. Cleopatra allows for a breach between motive and act. She does not deny that she broke her “vowed faith,” but she does not explain either to herself or to the audience/reader what led her to her crime. Her subsequent dialogue with her maid Charmian shows that she now utterly rejects the idea Antony had ascribed to her, that of saving herself and her crown by seeking Caesar’s favor. While leaving unresolved the mystery of her flight at Actium, Garnier’s and Sidney’s plays invite admiration for the eloquent Cleopatra as she takes responsibility for her mistake, laments it, remains steadfast in her love for Antony, and finally resolves on suicide rather than become Caesar’s captive. Sidney’s Cleopatra, in an interesting addition to Garnier’s text, explains her fear of becoming Caesar’s prisoner in terms that imply a concern for her future fame: in lines important for Shakespeare’s Cleopatra, Sidney’s states her desire to avoid becoming a part of the spectacular “triumph” Caesar will stage upon returning to Rome (ll. 1644–5).

The importance of suicide to the story of Antony and Cleopatra suggests another reason for Sidney’s decision to translate Garnier’s play. Mary Ellen Lamb (1981) argues that Sidney wanted her 1592 volume to contribute to the tradition of discourse about how to die well (*ars moriendi*). By translating a play in which the main characters’ chief ethical decision is whether to surrender to Octavius or to take their own lives, Sidney chose a text that raises some of the same moral questions posed in the prose *Discourse on Life and Death* that she printed with *Antonius*. Lamb further argues that Sidney attempts to “apply Mornay’s philosophy to the situation of Renaissance women” through the portrayal of Cleopatra’s Stoic death. Garnier’s portrait of Cleopatra as a loyal wife (at least at the end of the play) offers an “unusual suppression of Cleopatra’s sexual nature” and therefore “suggests insights into the way in which the resolve to die cleanses a heroine of sexual taint” (Lamb 1981, 129, 131–2). Some critics, however, have suggested that Sidney would have expected her readers to see Cleopatra (and Antony too) as illustrating how *not* to die well from either a Stoic or a Christian perspective (Skretkovicz 1999, 9–10). De Mornay does explicitly condemn suicide, and Garnier’s play may seek to soften the problem of suicide for his Christian readers by leaving it unclear at the end whether Cleopatra has actually applied the asps or not (Herbert 1998, 143). Since there is a thin line, in some historical and literary instances, between Stoic suicide and Christian martyrdom, however, Sidney could well have chosen to juxtapose Garnier’s and de Mornay’s texts to promote thought about a much-debated problem rather than to provide clear ethical answers.

The moral dilemma of suicide is further complicated in the character of Cleopatra, who is represented with a kind of baroque eroticism that Lamb does not fully explore, since it goes against her view that Sidney ennobles Cleopatra by “suppressing” the attributes of sexual voraciousness she has in Plutarch’s *Life of Antony* and in many of the later European treatments of her story.⁶ Echoing Catullus’ famous poem to Lesbia, Sidney’s Cleopatra ends the play with the following lines:

A thousand kisses, thousand thousand more
 Let you my mouth for honors farewell give;
 That in this office weake my limbes may growe
 Fainting on you, and fourth my soule may flowe.

(ll. 2019–22)

Garnier ends with a distinctly less positive image of dying: his Cleopatra “vomits” her soul onto Antony’s body as she performs the last funerary rites.⁷ “Vomit” has a more metaphorical meaning in French than it does in English, as Eve Sanders (1998, 110) remarks; Sidney clearly saw that a literal translation would not do for her final lines, although earlier in the play – when Antony describes the death in battle he would like to have experienced – she renders his image of vomiting blood and life literally (ll. 1090–1). For Cleopatra, however, Sidney offers a more alliterative and liquid image of death than Garnier does; and the “images of arousal and climax in the final two lines” of Sidney’s text combine with a “confusion of subject and object,” as Sanders observes, in a way that “evokes images of reciprocal erotic expression” (1998, 117). Describing her and Philip’s “coupled work” of translating the psalms in a poem of 1599, Sidney writes, “So dar’d my Muse with thine it selfe combine, / as mortall stuffe with that which is divine” (ll. 5–6; Herbert 1998, 110).

Several recent critics have suggested that Sidney was drawn to Garnier’s play because she found aspects of Cleopatra’s character and situation germane to her own as a writer and translator who worked, as Hannay suggests, “from the margins” (1990, x; Uman 2012, 82). Garnier’s Cleopatra struggles with her conflicting identities and duties. She is an anxious mother who suffers, unlike most of her other literary incarnations, when she parts from her children; she is also a ruler who laments causing her people’s oppression at Caesar’s hands and a lover who wants to think of herself as a loyal “wife,” although she “scarcely” is one, as her servant Charmian dryly reminds her (l. 598). Garnier’s and Sidney’s texts both suggest that part of Antony’s attraction to Cleopatra comes from her powers of language, which Octavia, Antony’s legal wife, does not possess. Garnier presents Cleopatra’s verbal skills as superior even to her beauty (ll. 719–24), and he thus creates a hierarchy of Cleopatra’s graces, whereas Plutarch, and his sixteenth-century translators Jacques Amyot and Thomas North, simply juxtapose Cleopatra’s physical graces with her linguistic skills. Garnier’s Cleopatra uses her voice, accompanied by hand gestures such as those that might be used by an actor, to conduct affairs of state. As Sidney’s text puts it:

hir training speache,
Her grace, hir Majestie, and forcing voice,
Whither she it with fingers speech consortie,
Or hearing sceptred kings ambassadors
Answer to eache in his owne language make.
(ll. 728–32)

The lines could allude to Sidney herself, as a skilled poet and translator; they could simultaneously offer an elegant if ultimately sobering compliment to Queen Elizabeth, whose skill in languages and in diplomacy was famous. An implied analogy between Cleopatra and either the Queen or Sidney herself was, however, quite risky, as Eve Sanders observes (1998, 114). She persuasively argues that Sidney generally follows Garnier very closely while nonetheless making small changes that enhance Cleopatra’s heroic qualities. Although modern critics disagree about whether Sidney’s translation is “faithful” or “free” (Uman 2012, 82; Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 1996, 15), her originality arguably consists not in an individualistic swerve from her source, but rather in a complex political collaboration with him across lines of language, gender, and religion.

In translating Garnier’s play, Sidney found a vehicle for speaking publicly while not opening herself to censure. For an aristocratic Englishwoman aspiring to a public voice, the neo-Senecan

dramas being written and staged in France – in various “private” theatrical venues as well as the one Parisian theater available for public performances after the Counter-Reformation censoring of popular theater in 1548 – evidently looked more appealing as objects of imitation than they do to most modern readers. Sidney’s translation supports Gordon Braden’s argument that French neo-Senecan tragedy “can make up for its indifference to action or even conflict with an appreciation for the special courage and authority of the human voice” (1985, 128). Valuing the voice both as an instrument of moral reflection and as a dramaturgical equivalent for action (on the seventeenth-century French stage, as d’Aubignac asserts in his manual of “practical” theater, “speech is action”),⁸ Garnier’s play about a woman using her voice to conduct affairs of state gave Sidney a model for using Roman history to explore current political issues such as the Queen’s failure, in the eyes of the Sidneys and some of her other militantly Protestant subjects, to expend sufficient funds to fight Catholic forces in the Netherlands, where Philip Sidney had died in 1586. The most compelling recent interpretations of Sidney’s *Antonius* see it, in Danielle Clarke’s formulation, as a “carefully timed use of the Garnier text to illuminate issues of rule, government, and morality” (1997, 151).⁹

The power of neo-Senecan drama to articulate the possibility and cost of resistance to tyranny is illustrated by Garnier’s and Sidney’s heroines, who, in striking contrast to Étienne Jodelle’s Cleopatra, scorn Caesar and choose to follow Antony in death without bargaining at all with the emperor. The lovers are noble but flawed; Caesar, in contrast, seems ignoble and dangerously greedy in both Garnier’s and Sidney’s plays: Sidney’s Augustus is sinfully proud that his “image” (Garnier’s “idole”) is worshipped in every town (4.1382). Both authors suggest that there is a moral flaw at the heart of the imperial desire for conquest over others.

Although some critics have attempted to unlock Sidney’s and Garnier’s political allegories by finding one-to-one correspondences between the ancient characters in the play and contemporary figures, neither Sidney nor Garnier offers an easily legible topical allegory. Both were highly aware of the need to veil their meanings and both may have harbored complex, even changing, views about their country’s governors. Garnier gives political subjects a voice, albeit a highly stylized one, in his Choruses, which Sidney renders in short, rhymed lines that contrast with the blank verse typically spoken by her royal protagonists. Using a stylistic contrast to suggest a difference in characters’ social status, she models a technique later used by Shakespeare; she also anticipates Shakespeare by depicting gloriously eloquent royal protagonists who eventually suffer the indignities of being ruled – by their passions, by the great leveler Death, and also by Octavius Caesar. Garnier’s critical attitude toward Octavius is important to Sidney, and also to our assessment of the kind of cultural work her translation performed. By Englishing the work of a French Catholic, Sidney underscores Clarke’s contention that there was a good deal of “shared theoretical ground” between Catholic and Protestant theories of resistance to tyranny (1997, 153).

Elizabeth Cary

Elizabeth Cary was not so well-born as Sidney, but she was also marked both by her family of birth and by the family she entered through marriage. Cary’s father, who acquired a knighthood, and hence gentry status, only in 1604, used money gained from his tenants and his lawyer’s fees to give his only child an attractive dowry that allowed her to be married in 1602 to a man whose noble connections on the maternal side made him a good prospect for a peerage. According to the biography of Cary by one (or perhaps more) of her four daughters who entered an Augustinian

convent in France, Sir Henry Cary married his fifteen-year-old bride “only for being an heir, for he had no acquaintance with her.”¹⁰ He became Viscount of Falkland in 1620, having spent his wife’s dowry and having attempted to spend her jointure – the money settled on her by her father – as well. Their marriage produced eleven children “born alive,” according to the *Life* (191). That text, which Heather Wolfe describes as a “hagiographically motivated conversion narrative of a mother and six of her children” (2007, 3), has also been interpreted as a complex and dramatic narrative weaving together some of Cary’s Catholic children’s differing memories of and perspectives on both of their parents (Dolan 2003). The marriage was clearly not happy; although Cary attempted to obey her husband, she often failed to please him. The *Life* does not always take her part against his, and it offers both tragic and comic scenes from their union. When Cary was publicly revealed to be a Roman Catholic in 1625 (she herself did not publicize her conversion), her husband was furious; they were bitterly estranged, although she returned to attend to him on his deathbed. *The Life* provides uncanny parallels to the much earlier play’s portrait of a royal couple divided by bloodlines (one aspect of the play’s complex reflection on “racial” and religious difference) and by the wife’s inability to obey both her husband and the dictates of her conscience.

The *Life* describes Cary’s education, her extraordinary facility with languages, and a precocity which the biographer imbues with religious symbolism: at the age of twelve, Cary allegedly read Calvin’s *Institutes* and began to express her objections. The religious context colors the biographer’s selection of detail: she writes that her mother composed a number of saints’ lives (now lost) and gave up playgoing after her husband’s death in 1633. The *Life* implies that Cary’s “love” for theatrical productions, evidently indulged before her husband’s death, was a sin that needed chastisement: “she went no more,” the biographer melodramatically states, “to masques nor plays, not so much as at the court, though she loved them very much, especially the last extremely; nor to any other such public thing” (Cary [1613] 1994, 224). Although the *Life* mentions nothing about Cary’s interest in writing plays, its description of her “extreme” love of the spectator role nonetheless provides an interesting gloss on the dialectic between pleasure and renunciation (often figured as self-censorship) that Cary explores in *Mariam* and that Garnier and Sidney had explored in their dramas as well.

The many suggestive but inexact parallels between Cary’s dramatic portrayal of a wife’s resistance to her husband’s demands and her own later marital travails have provoked an important debate about the relevance of biography in critical approaches to *Mariam*. Alexandra Bennett, for instance, imports Cary’s use of the motto “be and seem,” detailed in the *Life*, as a critical framework for delineating the different models of women as “speaking and performing agents” in *Mariam* (2000, 298). Others scholars disagree, warning that biographical readings are ahistorical, reductive, and even harmful in that they presume a model of literary history in which women’s creativity is limited to their lives and experiences (Wright 1996; Callaghan 1994). As Alison Shell has observed, however, with Cary the biography “keeps intruding itself into critical conversation.” Shell therefore proposes a more flexible and recursive model for the relationship between life and work. She describes *Mariam* as an “autodidactic” work, one which “demands parallels between past and present tenses, principally to set the imaginative agenda for future action” (2007, 57). Indeed, autodidacticism offers a useful model for autobiographical elements in the works of all three writers discussed in this chapter. Each uses drama to imagine possible responses to political and personal dilemmas, and these fictional representations may then serve as models for the writer’s and others’ subsequent actions, as these are recorded for readers of the future to look back on and interpret.

Probably written between 1603 and 1609, Cary's *Mariam* is described by her teacher Sir John Davies as the as yet-unprinted product of a Muse who moves "in Buskin fine, / With feete of State" (Davies [1612] 1967). The description neatly conflates the image of the classical tragic actor's booted feet with an allusion to Cary's metrical feet; her play is in iambic pentameter lines rhyming *abab* throughout, except for occasional rhyming couplets, some arranged to close the numerous sonnets that are embedded in the play-text (Bell 2007). Both in its concern with English poetic form and in various aspects of its content, the play shows its debt to a Sidnean muse. Adapting a story from Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* (c.90 CE) to her own political and theological purposes, Cary is also indebted to Thomas Lodge's 1602 translation of Josephus' works.¹¹ Lodge, who had publicly alluded to his conversion to Roman Catholicism in a poem published in 1596 on the subject of the tears of the Mother of God, arguably turned to Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* in order to explore parallels between the oppression of Roman Catholics in seventeenth-century England and that of the Jews in the ancient Roman empire (Cary [1613] 1994, 18). Cary, too, explores these parallels and does so in a way that seems designed to avoid censure; *Mariam*, for example, is depicted as the virtuous antitype of Rome's enemy Cleopatra, who is presented as a sensual and dark-skinned rival to *Mariam* (Act 4, scene 8) and who therefore resembles Herod's sister Salome more than the noble Egyptian who emerges (eventually) in Garnier's, Sidney's, and Daniel's versions of Cleopatra's story.

Cary's *Mariam*, however, is forced to learn that having virtue (and being proud of it) cannot save a woman from having her reputation darkened by others' perceptions of her. Both Herod and his first wife, Doris, see *Mariam* as an adulteress at different moments in the plot, and Salome succeeds in persuading the jealous Herod – who is absent for the first three acts of the play and is reported to be dead – that his wife has betrayed him with the servant Herod had charged with guarding her (and who was to have killed her if Herod really died). In Herod's fickle view, *Mariam* becomes a traitor, as dangerous to his masculine power as Cleopatra was to Antony's at the Battle of Actium. Cary's *Mariam* therefore not only contrasts with Cleopatra but becomes like her at certain points in the plot; both characters, along with Salome, also refract aspects of the historical figure of Elizabeth I, whose reputation was even more hotly debated after her death in 1603 than it had been during her life. Fairness and darkness, as moral descriptors with uncertainly visible analogues in women's skin color, which can be altered by the artifice of paint, are unstable signifiers in the world of Cary's play.

The events dramatized in *Mariam* occurred around 29 BCE, when the man later known as Herod the Great, having been appointed tetrarch or governor of Judea by Mark Antony, married the Maccabean princess *Mariam* and thereby secured his "title" to the throne of Judea. The moral legitimacy of that title is rendered doubtful, however, by Cary's "Argument," which serves as a preface to the play and signals that it participates in that task of commenting on affairs of state that was so often performed – at risk of censure – by neo-Senecan dramas.¹² Cary's play is less statically declamatory than Sidney's and Garnier's – indeed Cary's characters meet and look at and argue with each other quite freely, especially in the first three acts of the play in which Herod is absent and reputed to be dead. Nonetheless, Cary's play follows the Sidnean model in having many long soliloquies of considerable moral complexity, action that occurs during a single day, and a plot concerned with a form of tyranny that includes a demand for idolatrous worship. The various subalterns resisting Herod during the course of the play include not only *Mariam*, but also his divorced wife Doris; his brother, Pheroras, who wants to marry a slave girl, Graphina, against Herod's will; and two young men who have been hidden by Salome's husband, Constabarus, since Herod decreed their death after they resisted his initial usurpation of the

throne. These young men, the sons of Babus, die in the play, as Mariam does, because of Salome's Iago-like plotting, but also because they make the mistake of publishing their thoughts in a premature and politically naive way. Intriguingly, the only character who resists Herod successfully is his sister Salome; indeed she uses her powers of politic eloquence to manipulate the plot, arrange Mariam's death, and, in a striking departure from the norms of tragedy, escape discovery and punishment at the play's end. Babus' sons, like Graphina and Mariam, play a symbolically significant role in the play's meditation on when – and to whom – it is safe to speak or write one's inner thoughts. In the landscape of Cary's play, as in that of early Jacobean England, equivocation as a way of hiding potentially treasonous ideas was a much-debated practice for both Catholics and Protestants (Ferguson 2003, 273–83).

The play's Argument alerts us immediately to Cary's concern with the problem of tyranny: Herod is described as "having crept by the favour of the Romans" into the Jewish (that is, Maccabean) monarchy; he then attempts to consolidate his dubious claim to the throne by replacing his wife Doris with Mariam. She is the only member of the royal family whom Herod allows to live (Cary [1613] 1994, 67). The Argument suggests many reasons why the Judeans should resist Herod's authority. He has displaced and murdered, on a spurious charge of treason, Mariam's grandfather, the "rightful" male king who is also his people's priest; he has "repudiated" a wife who had given him heirs; and he has killed his new wife's brother (under cover of "sport") in order to appropriate a title which, Cary's phrasing suggests, belongs by right to his wife.

Both the setting and the plot of *Mariam* suggest an analogical relation between Judea in the years just before Christ's birth and England in the years after its traumatic break from the Church of Rome. In England's domestic spaces as in the imperial nation at large, the distinction between friend and enemy, loyalist and traitor, could be extremely labile. Cary represents this lability in her drama, where a husband who is also a king ultimately censors his wife in the most extreme fashion – by "dividing" her body from her head – after the wife refuses to censor herself. "I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught / My face a look dissenting from my thought," she declares, refusing to smile obediently when Herod bids her to (4.3.145–6). Her response of nonresponsiveness "vexes" him, and the exchange seems to confirm the servant Sohemus' view that Mariam brings on her own death by refusing to "bridle her tongue." The play, however, suggests multiple causes for the heroine's death and its tragic consequences: madness for Herod and hence disorder for the state. Readers are invited to ponder these multiple causes along with the play's layered allegorical allusions to contemporary history. The play begins with the heroine asking questions about her behavior and about the mysterious relation between her present and past selves: "How oft have I with public voice run on / To censure Rome's last hero for deceit" (1.1.1–2). Mariam's self-questioning opening, which takes us abruptly into the interior theater of the heroine's mind, recalls the interrogative opening of Cleopatra's first soliloquy in Sidney's play: "That I have thee betraid, deare Antonie, / My life, my soule, my Sunne? I had such thought?" (Herbert 1998; ll. 394–5). Cary's play, like Sidney's, seems to live on unanswered questions that tease the reader into joining the play of the mind as it considers difficult questions – what Jesuits called "hard cases" – about the past and the present and a potential future.

Salome, the female character who uses words equivocally and adroitly, poses questions for interpreters that Mariam's first generation of feminist readers (including one present author) did not see because we assumed that the heroine, not the villain, was the portrait of the artist. Read through more historically informed hermeneutic lenses, however, Salome's fate leaves open a space for wondering whether survival through equivocation rather than death through plain-speaking martyrdom represents a course of action for the future that the play allegorically

recommends for its English Catholic readers. The play allows us to consider Cary a sophisticated reader of debates about suicide, martyrdom, and divorce in both England and the Continent. Rather than praising the pre-Christian figure of Mariam unequivocally, Cary's play invites modern readers to think about Mariam as an analogue for Milton's Samson, who has been interpreted both as a type and an antitype of Christ. For modern readers and/or spectators of Cary's play, who see it exploring many shades of gray between good and evil, Salome's argument that women should have the same rights to divorce as men do according to the Hebrew scripture echoes ironically into the future.

Margaret Cavendish

Cavendish's marriage, like those of Sidney and Cary, was an important context for her literary career. As a lady-in-waiting to Queen Henrietta-Maria, the then-Margaret Lucas met and married the much older William Cavendish, the Marquess and later Duke of Newcastle. William served as Margaret's patron and sometimes as her collaborator, although his interventions did not always accord with her designs for her textual property, as Valerie Billing (2011) and Jeffrey Masten (2004) have shown. With William's support, however, she wrote copiously; in addition to her two volumes of plays, she also published works of natural philosophy, fiction, and poetry. Hero Chalmers has argued that Cavendish's numerous publications were part of a "shared political project" designed to reassert her family's status in the wake of royalist defeat and her husband's long exile from England (2004, 10). The plays in her 1662 volume, written from exile, directly reflect the ways that the English Revolution transformed both her family's status and the status of drama. Cavendish claims that she published her plays rather than waiting for performance because "they are in English, and England doeth not permit, I will not say of Wit, yet not of Playes" (Shaver 1999, 254). Her early plays offer a nostalgic account of dramatic and political forms that, from her Royalist perspective, have ended, as well as, in the post-Restoration plays of the 1668 volume, a critical and often cynical account of the forms that have replaced them.

Cavendish is notable and notorious for her desire for fame. She expresses an ambition that the conventions of feminine modesty prevented many women from acknowledging. As she wrote in the preface to *The Blazing World*, "I am not covetous, but as ambitious as ever any of my sex was, is, or can be, which makes that though I cannot be *Henry* the Fifth, or *Charles* the Second, yet I endeavour to be *Margaret the First*" (Cavendish 2003, 6). Cavendish construes literary achievement as a compensation for the children she did not have and the political agency that her sex precludes. Even though this stance attracted detraction from her contemporaries, Cavendish herself had confidence that her writing was her posterity. As she writes in an address to her readers in her second volume of plays, "I regard not so much the present as future Ages, for which I intend all my books" (Shaver 1999, 273).

Cavendish's desire for fame has led scholars to identify many of the heroic protagonists of her drama as authorial avatars. As Sophie Tomlinson has argued, such characters are the product of a theatrical fantasy of female performance in which "Cavendish can marry the contrary impulses to solitude and sociability, bashfulness and exhibitionism, which inform the text of her life" (1998, 283). As with Cary, "autodidacticism" offers a useful model for thinking about the autobiographical elements of her texts. Cavendish's desire for fame resulted in repeated dramatic experiments in the possibilities of the female voice. Cavendish's plays construct competing accounts of cultural change and competing accounts of women's agency and sovereignty.

Scholarly interest in Cavendish's drama has increased in the last twenty years, but we do not yet have modern editions of all of her plays.¹³ Interest has been greatest in those plays that dramatize the efforts of a singular female hero to achieve glory, sometimes through the creation of a (temporary) female collective. In *Bell in Campo* (1662), Lady Victoria is disappointed when her soldier husband refuses to allow her to accompany him to war. Arguing that it is custom, not nature, that has limited women's opportunities, Lady Victoria gathers an army of female soldiers and pursues a regimen of training and discipline designed to counteract the deficits of women's educations. In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, only Salome explicitly challenges naturalized gender ideologies, declaring "I'll be the custom-breaker: and begin / To show my sex the way to freedom's door" (1.4.309–10). In *Bell in Campo*, however, the heroine offers an extended analysis of how custom has limited women's opportunities:

the Masculine Sex is of an opinion we are only fit to breed and bring forth Children, but otherwise a trouble in a Common-wealth, for though we encrease the Common-wealth by our breed, we encomber it by our weakness, as they think ... and the reason of these erroneous opinions of the Masculine Sex to the Effeminate, is that our Bodies seem weak, being delicate and beautifull, and our minds seem fearfull, being compassionate and gentle natured, but if we were both weak and fearfull, as they imagine us to be, yet custome which is a second Nature will encourage the one and strengthen the other, and had our educations been answerable to theirs, we might have proved as good Souldiers and Privy Counsellors, Rulers and Commanders, Navigators and Architects, and as learned Scholars both in Arts and Sciences, as men are; for Time and Custome is the Father and Mother of Strength and Knowledge. (Shaver 1999, 119)

Lady Victoria recognizes that custom has been used to restrict women's agency, but that it can also be used by women for their own advancement. New customs make new lives; Lady Victoria enacts a system of rules and discipline – including the exclusion of all men from her female army – that allows women to defeat their enemies and gain honor and glory by rejecting their customary exclusion from martial pursuits. Lady Victoria brings together a group of women, trains them, and leads them to success in battle, thus demonstrating that it is custom rather than nature that restricts women.

In *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668), likewise, the actions of a singular heroic protagonist serve as the catalyst for the creation of a female collective. Lady Happy is dissatisfied with women's opportunities in marriage, so she gathers unmarried women into a convent where they can pursue their own interests and desires. Women with the means to support themselves would be "mad to live with Men who make the female sex their slaves" (Shaver 1999, 220). Not a "convent" in the typical sense, Lady Happy's community is organized to encourage women to pursue pleasure. The exclusion of men creates a space for female desire and also for a critique of the status quo. In one of the most powerful episodes in Cavendish's drama, the ladies of the convent perform a series of poignant scenes that depict less privileged women's suffering in marriage and motherhood, offering a metadramatic commentary on the injustices from which the convent offers a respite (Act 3, scenes 2–10). In this play and in *The Religious* (1662) Cavendish uses the idea of a religious community as a model for unorthodox collectives that challenge the presumption of heteronormative desire (Billing 2011; Traub 2002).

These plays offer dramatic representations of radical alternatives for women and direct challenges to contemporary gender ideology; however, each also concludes with a significant contraction of these possibilities. As Gweno Williams argues, Cavendish's plays have endings that are "consistently conformist, revalidating the status quo, particularly marriage" (2000, 100).

In *Bell in Campo*, Lady Victoria's military victories suggest a radical rejection of custom and a reordering of social norms, but their lasting effect is limited. Women are given more freedom as a reward for Victoria's triumphs, but these new laws tend to restrict women to the domestic realm and reinscribe a hierarchy among women. Meanwhile, the two subplots depict women who are widowed by the war, surely a more common occurrence for early modern women than Lady Victoria's triumphs. Both widows suffer and are diminished by the loss of marital status. Madam Jantil mourns her husband and dies of grief, while Madam Passionate misuses the freedom of widowhood to choose a young suitor who abuses her. Even more ominously, *The Convent of Pleasure* concludes with the infiltration of the convent by a prince in princess's clothing and the dispersal of the community. The prince, in lines conspicuously attributed to Cavendish's husband, announces that he will marry Lady Happy "by force of Arms" if necessary (Shaver 1999, 244). All critical accounts of Cavendish's drama, therefore, must grapple with the contradiction between the apparently feminist representations of women's potential and the plays' more orthodox conclusions. Williams suggests that Cavendish could not imagine otherwise: "her project is temporarily to stage rather than permanently realise woman-centred alternatives" (2000, 100). Karen Raber attributes the conflict to Cavendish's aristocratic privileging of status over gender: "Only under cover of such conservative class politics can Cavendish's work successfully promote the subversive *voice* (but not necessarily any politics or value system to accompany it) of woman" (1998, 472). The feminine collectives of Cavendish's drama are temporary; individual women gain glory through their heroic singularity or, as Catherine Gallagher (1988) has argued, through the cultivation of a subjectivity modeled on the absolute monarch.

Another fruitful approach to this problem, however, is through an analysis of the formal qualities of Cavendish's drama. Early criticism tended to dismiss Cavendish's plays as "undramatic," "unstageable," or "without discipline" because her multiple plots often lack causal or other logical connections (Grant 1957, 161; Payne 1991, 30; Randall 1995, 30). It is true that, in the 1662 volume of *Playes* especially, Cavendish's plays lack the organization by dramatic "unities" that Sidney and Cary adopted. Instead, Cavendish produces complex, multiplot plays that advance their themes through parallel and juxtaposition. She explains that this procedure results in a greater degree of verisimilitude than that produced by the so-called unities of time, space, and action. She intends her plays to present the "Follies, Vanities, Vices, Humours, Dispositions, Passions, Affections, Fashions, Customs, Manners, and practices of the whole World of Mankind," but believes it is not "Usual, Probable, nor Natural" for these "Varieties to be drawn at the latter end into one piece" (Shaver 1999, 255–6). Cavendish's stated preference for verisimilitude casts an interesting light on the wish-fulfillment or fantasy that so many readers find in her plays. Her characteristic multiplot structure allows these heroic narratives to coexist with other forms of dramatic representation. As Jacqueline Pearson observes of *Bell in Campo*, "in the heroic-fantasy world of the main plot the woman warrior can insist on her own power. In the more realistic world of the subplots women seem dependent on men, exploited by them, and incapable of life without them" (1985, 36). The characteristic dramatic structure of the 1662 volume has the significant function, therefore, of embedding portraits of women's agency within narratives that dramatize the social and cultural obstacles to employing that agency.

Cavendish's multiplot structure creates a double vision in which positive representations of exceptional women are accompanied by representations of women who are constrained by circumstance and negative portraits of women's weaknesses drawn from the tradition of misogynist satire. *Youths Glory and Deaths Banquet* (1662) and *Loves Adventures* (1662) illustrate this double vision in tragic and comic modes, respectively. *Youths Glory and Deaths Banquet* tells the parallel

stories of Lady Sanspareille, an educated woman who seeks fame through a series of public orations, and Lady Innocence, a woman betrayed by her fiancé and his unscrupulous mistress. In its juxtaposition of the stories of Sanspareille and Innocence, *Youths Glory and Deaths Banquet* produces a trenchant examination of women's claims upon posterity. For Sanspareille, education and ambition replace and indeed transcend feminine reproductive responsibilities. Although her mother worries that Sanspareille's consort with books will be the end of their family – she accuses her husband of breeding “your daughter, as if your Posterity were to be raised from a Poets phantastical brain” (Cavendish 1662, 123) – her father consents to Sanspareille's decision not to marry because “for my Posterity, I had rather it should end with merit, than run on in follies ... I had rather live in thy fame, than live or dye in an infamous and foolish succession” (130–1). Sanspareille and, by extension, her father will live to after ages through a daughter's superior education and rhetorical skill, products of the mind rather than the body. Innocence's claim upon posterity, by contrast, is defined by woman's traditional role as vessel for male inheritance. She is accepted as a wife only because her future husband fears that he will “cut off the line of my Posterity by never marrying” (Cavendish 1662, 125). But Lady Innocence's performance of traditional roles does not guarantee happiness, because it is only through her body that Lady Innocence has a relationship to posterity. When a false accusation is made against her, she loses her value as reproductive vessel and, eventually, her life. “The World would condemn me, if I should marry you,” her intended husband says, “to stain my Posterity with your Crimes” (168).

Sanspareille does not reconcile ambition for fame with a successful marriage. After receiving near universal acclaim for a series of orations, she begins to suffer from a sudden and unexplained illness that quickly causes her death. If Lady Sanspareille's triumph in the first part of this two-part play is a fantasy of feminine power, her eclipse in the second part is an equally powerful acknowledgment that the apotheosis of the singular woman is a fantasy. Lady Sanspareille, for all her brilliance, simply fades away. As she tells her father, “I cannot say I am very sick, or in any great pain; but I find a general alteration in me, as it were a fainting of spirits” (166). The resolution of Lady Innocence's plot follows a similar pattern. Although she is ultimately revealed to be, as her name indicates, innocent of the charges against her, no last-minute revelation of the truth transforms this tragedy into a tragicomedy. Instead, Innocence is betrayed by the malice of her rival and the blindness of the man chosen by her father as her protector. In fact, the narrative independence of the two plots ensures that the play remains a tragedy. Sanspareille does not use her oratorical abilities to transform the plot. In a parallel to *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the deaths of both protagonists demonstrate the limitations of the singular woman. As Raber maintains, “A woman who speaks publicly cannot produce a comic outcome” (2001, 222). The conflict between individual and society in tragedy, however, requires that the hero or heroine's triumph occur through death. In this respect, Lady Innocence resembles the stoic heroines who preceded her when she defines her suicide as a means to freedom and power. “Though Death hath power over Life, yet Life can command Death when it will,” she declares (Cavendish 1662, 173). Lady Innocence's scorn for her enemies is a classic stoic pose – “As for my accusers, I can easily forgive them, because they are below my Hate or Anger, neither are worthy of my revenge” (175) – and it prepares for her reclamation of name and reputation through death, as tragedy allows.

Perhaps these limitations, inherent in the tragic genre, explain Cavendish's marked preference for comedy and tragicomedy.¹⁴ In *Loves Adventures*, Cavendish juxtaposes different modes of comedy, which allow for a fuller exploration of female agency. *Loves Adventures* contains three plots. In the first, a Viola-like Lady Orphant dresses as a boy and wins her true love. In the second, a gender-reversed *Epicoene*, a misanthropic woman wins the love of a silent man, while

the third is a comedy of humors plot describing the correction of the social ambitions of Lady Ignorance by her husband Sir Studious. Like other of Cavendish's plays, these three plots juxtapose different variations on a single dramatic situation. Cavendish contrasts two dramatic representations of courtship, the usual material of comedy, with a rather sour and disappointing portrait of marriage, the typical endpoint of the romantic comedy plot. Combining elements of Shakespearean romantic comedy with those of Jonsonian comedy of humors, *Loves Adventures* exemplifies the double vision of Cavendish's drama (Dodds 2013, 159–90). Lady Orphant and Lady Bashful find their husbands through their own agency, by finding their voices, but when Lady Ignorance tries to assert her desires, she learns the harsh lesson of being a wife: husbands love wives out of “self-love,” and wives had best recognize that “a man would have his wife be loving and chaste for his honours sake, to be thrifty for his profit sake, to be patient for his quiet sake, to be cleanly, witty and beautiful for his pleasure sake.” When she forgets her subordinate role, however, “he hates her” (Shaver 1999, 39). This unforgiving reminder of social hierarchy serves as a counterpart to the Chorus of Cary's *Mariam*, tempering the celebration of outspoken women elsewhere in *Love's Adventure*.

The plays published in 1668 show Cavendish's continued engagement with theatrical and dramatic traditions. Cavendish's later plays abandon the sprawling, multiplot structure characteristic of the 1662 volume; the four complete plays in the later volume are more spare and often display a more cynical attitude toward social norms and expectations.¹⁵ *The Sociable Companions, or Female Wits* illustrates both the complexities of the politics of Cavendish's plays and her developing dramatic practices. A “pointedly post-Restoration” play, *The Sociable Companions* uses the economic and marital dilemmas of a group of demobilized soldiers and their sisters as a way to explore the causes and consequences of the Civil War (Crawford 2005, 253).

The Sociable Companions (1668) follows the efforts of four women to make advantageous marriages. In a reworking of a plot from her earlier play *The Publick Wooing* (1662), the first of these women, Prudence, chooses her own husband by responding publicly to each of her suitors based on his merits. Prudence has freedom in courtship because she is an heiress and because her father profited from the Civil War. The other women, sisters to Cavaliers who “lost their Wits when they lost their Estates” (Cavendish 1668, 12), do not have the same freedom. Their brothers valued “loyalty” over wisdom; had they not been “so vain to have show'd their Valour, they might have been so prudent to have kept their estates” (10). As it stands, however, these three women, without dowries, must rely on their wits to find husbands.

The Sociable Companions valorizes women's wit. The English Revolution produced a failure of social order and political authority, and in this play, it is women who find a way to regain social status for themselves and their families in spite of these changed circumstances. Early in the play, Will Fullwit, one of the brothers, is found studying the classics, including Plutarch's *Lives*, Thucydides, Lucan, and Caesar's *Commentaries*. But his friends advise him to give up this study:

Why such Books, since you are neither *Greek* nor *Roman*? So that those Histories, or Historians of other Nations will not benefit thee, nor thy Native Country for their Laws, Customs, or Humours; for what are the Laws, Customs, Humours and Governments of the *Romans*, *Greeks*, *Turks*, or *Persians* to thee, or thy native Country? (Cavendish 1668, 12)

If Will endeavors to “make *Caesar* your Pattern, it were a thousand to one but you would shew your self rather a Fool than a *Caesar*” (17). In this skepticism about the value of classical history and philosophy, Cavendish seems to echo Thomas Hobbes on the Civil War: reading books led

men “to kill their king, because the Greek and Latin writers, in their books, and discourses of policy, make it lawful and laudable for any man to do so, provided, before he do it, he call him a tyrant” (Hobbes [1651] 1985, 369). Will gives up on study as a means of improvement, and the women are left to save their brothers and themselves. Earlier systems of moral value, including the stoicism that allowed Sidney and Cary to make such pointed political commentary, are rejected in favor of a more ambiguous form of self-interest (Dodds 2013). In the earlier *Publick Wooing* (1662), another character called Prudence triumphs because of her superior moral judgment. Initially she is derided because she chooses for her husband a beggar who does not conform to outward measures of nobility. By the conclusion of the play, her beggar is revealed to be a famous general in disguise and the two live happily in the knowledge that moral virtue and social status are aligned.

The Prudence of *The Sociable Companions* makes a similar choice, but she is not her play’s heroine, because in the social world of Cavendish’s post-Restoration plays, status and moral virtue do not always coincide. Prudence’s marriage is a good one, but the other three ladies triumph, each securing her future, and her brother’s, through theatricality and deceit: Peg marries a rich usurer by convincing him he has conceived a child incorporeally; Jane disguises herself as a clerk and gets a lawyer for a husband; Ann uses her brother’s threats to catch the doctor. In each case, the swindled husband is happy with his wife, and the play concludes with a celebration of the Cavaliers as “the best deceivers” (Cavendish 1668, 82). Here and elsewhere Cavendish does not address tyranny as explicitly as Sidney or Cary. This difference can be attributed partially to a difference in genre, but more significantly Cavendish’s indirect treatment of politics results from changed historical circumstances. Writing after the Civil War and Restoration, even a Royalist like Cavendish remains skeptical about the possibility of a stable monarchy. In the post-Restoration play *The Presence*, the emperor is largely absent and the characters are adrift in a Hobbesian world where most “live without Conscience, and die without fear” (5). In *The Presence* and the other plays in the 1668 volume, Cavendish anticipates a Restoration comic mode in which men and women seek their own self-interest in a world where values that were once stable have been thrown into question.¹⁶

Conclusion

Echoing Cavendish’s claim that an audience for her works would be found in the future rather than the present, Mihoko Suzuki (2003, 23) observes that early modern women “wrote for a public that in many ways did not exist,” a public that in fact did not exist until the late twentieth century. This chapter’s analysis of Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish testifies to the hard-won creation of such a public through the efforts of feminist scholars to discover and recover the creative work of women in the past. Further, this grouping of writers raises, implicitly and explicitly, questions about gender, authorship, and future directions for the study of early modern women’s writing.

Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish are grouped in this chapter primarily because of their gender, although we have discussed other links among them having to do with their status as “women in print” (to adapt a phrase from Wall 1993); their thematic concerns with tyranny, fame, and censorship; and their use of the “autodidactic” mode. The ways in which their perspectives are inflected by gender provide valuable insight into the conditions of female authorship during a segment in the long English Renaissance that spans over seventy years. Although these women

did not write for the commercial theaters of their time, print publication enabled them to enter a domain of public debate through dramatic writings that occupy an “equivocal space” (Raber 2001, 14) between public and private spheres revealed to be multiple and heterogeneous. These plays invite consideration in the light of Alison Findlay’s concept of a “floating stage” that encompasses conceptual frames belonging both to the household and to the state (2006, 31; also Wynne-Davies 2010, 188). As Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish demonstrate in various ways, drama provides resources for exploring the potential for women’s agency and the conditions of political authority. For Sidney and Cary, the figure of the tragic heroine allows reflection not only on social constraints on women’s speech, but also on the tragic consequences of tyranny. Cavendish writes more often in the comic mode, but her plays also use the seemingly private concerns of courtship and marriage to comment upon the upheavals of the English Revolution. As the work of Victoria Kahn (2004) and others has demonstrated, mid seventeenth-century thinkers repeatedly turned to the marriage contract as a means to explore new forms of sovereignty.

Considerations of the politics of gender are important but should not constitute a limit to our assessment of these playwrights’ contributions to English Renaissance drama; nor should these three figures of the female playwright be considered representative of early modern English women’s achievements in the dramatic vein. Other frames of reference show the thematic and generic complexity of these women’s dramas and open new questions for scholars to pursue. Were the London commercial theaters, for instance, less open to female playwrights in the 1660s than Dublin’s Smock Alley Theater, where Cavendish’s contemporary Katherine Philips eagerly pursued fame by having her translation of Corneille’s play *La Morte de Pompée* performed in the winter of 1662–3 (Uman 2012, 88)? Our focus on print publication excludes manuscript plays such as Jane Lumley’s translation (c.1557) of Euripides’ *Iphigeneia at Aulis*; Mary Wroth’s pastoral drama *Love’s Victory* (c.1621); or Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish’s *The Concealed Fancies* (c.1645). In the past two decades, archival research has uncovered numerous previously unknown women writers who chose – or were perhaps required by their families – to circulate their works in manuscript. How has a critical privileging of print and professional performance obscured the contributions of female writers? How has it obscured evidence of female performance? The “all-male” stage has been a foundational assumption of Renaissance drama, but the work of Clare McManus (2002), Natasha Korda (2011), and Peter Parolin and Pamela Allen Brown (2005) shows how a shift of attention to elite masquing traditions, women’s labor in the theatrical economy, or religious and ritual performances in the provinces complicates a narrative of women’s absence from the “transvestite” public stage. How does the focus on elite aristocratic authors obscure the contributions of women from other walks of life? Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish had greater access to education than many early modern women, but, as P. A. Skantze has argued, there was an “intensification of the public theatrical space” during the interregnum, when pamphlets were “produced and read aloud in squares and in taverns” (2003, 85). How did this new political environment provide the conditions for non-elite women to engage in theatrical or performance cultures?

Since the publication of the earlier *Companion to Renaissance Drama* in 2002, there has been significant new work on women dramatists and women’s participation in the many playing spaces of early modern Britain, including the street, the alehouse, and the market place (Brown 2010). However, this research also reveals that there is much that remains unknown; so we end not with a summation but with speculation and questions. By the time the next *Companion* is written, perhaps Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish will not be grouped together but will instead appear in differently configured essays that will continue to regard gender as a significant

category of historical analysis while also acknowledging, as we have sought to do here, that Renaissance women playwrights saw gender as one among many social questions worthy of probing through the medium of drama.

NOTES

- 1 We have elected to refer to these women as Sidney, Cary, and Cavendish because these names are the most commonly used in modern scholarship. Since these women were married to men with noble titles, they also used the titles Countess of Pembroke, Lady Falkland, and Marchioness and Duchess of Newcastle. Some modern critics refer to Sidney as Sidney Herbert.
- 2 For Mary Sidney's influence on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, see the editors' introduction to *Antonius* in Herbert (1998, 39–40); Hannay (2000, 138). For other plays indebted to Sidney's translation see Cerasano and Wynne-Davies (1996, 16).
- 3 See Cary ([1613] 1994, Introduction 42) for Lewis Theobald's argument that Othello not only resembles but alludes to Cary's Herod in the famous crux of the Folio's lines about the "base Judean [or Indian]" who "threw a Pearle away." *Othello* and *Mariam* have been printed together in an edition by Clare Carroll (2003).
- 4 Cited from Cary ([1613] 1994, 113); all citations from *The Tragedy of Mariam* are from this edition; the quoted phrase is from the Act 3, l. 240.
- 5 All citations are from *Antonius*, the 1592 text published by Ponsonby, in Herbert (1998). The 1595 text, also published by Ponsonby, is available in Cerasano and Wynne-Davies (1996).
- 6 For other treatments of the Antony and Cleopatra story, see Barroll (1984), and Hughes-Hallett (1990).
- 7 "Et qu'en un tel devoir mon corps affoiblissant/Defaille dessus vous, mon ame vomissant"; Garnier (1975, 1. 1999). All citations of the French text are from this edition.
- 8 "là, *Parler, c'est agir*": Abbé d'Aubignac, *La Pratique du théâtre* (1715), Book 4, 11, cited in Braden (1985, 129).
- 9 For differing interpretations of the play's political meanings, see Skretkovicz (1999); Straznicki (1994); and Hannay (1990).
- 10 *The Lady Falkland: Her Life* (c.1643–51), in Cary ([1613] 1994, 188). All references to the *Life* are to this edition.
- 11 The chapters of Lodge's translation relevant to Cary's play are reprinted in Cary ([1613] 1994, 277–82).
- 12 On the political implications of Cary's choice of genre, see Fischer (1985); Raber (1995); Shannon (1994); Straznicki (1994); and Gutierrez (1991).
- 13 Where possible Cavendish's plays are cited from Shaver (1999), which is the most widely accessible of the modern editions. *Youths Glory and Deaths Banquet* and *The Publick Wooing* are cited from *Playes* (Cavendish 1662). *The Sociable Companions* is cited from *Plays, Never Before Printed* (Cavendish 1668).
- 14 Cavendish only attempted tragedy one other time, in *The Unnaturall Tragedy*, a reworking of the incest plot of John Ford's *'Tis Pity Sbe's a Whore*.
- 15 *Plays, Never before Printed* includes four complete plays: *The Sociable Companions; or Female Wits*, *The Presence*, *The Convent of Pleasure*, and *The Bridals*. Also included in the volume are a series of "Scenes" excerpted from *The Presence* and the unfinished *A Piece of a Play*, a dramatic animal-fable originally intended to accompany *The Blazing World*.
- 16 For the influence of Hobbes on Restoration dramatists, see Mintz (1970, 140).

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Nonprofessional Playwrights

Matteo Pangallo

Unemployed after a bout of chronic seasickness, young sailor Richard Norwood found himself idle in London in the spring of 1612. Making the most of a bad situation, he frequented the Fortune playhouse, where he became – as he wrote years later – “bewitched in affection and never satiated” by the plays of Prince Henry’s Men (Craven and Hayward 1945, 42; see Whitney 2006, 169–85). Norwood’s fascination with the stage had formed during his school days, when, he confesses, “I acted a woman’s part in a stage play” and thoroughly enjoyed the experience (Craven and Hayward 1945, 6). Although in his old age he came to repent it, as a youth, reading and acting plays fed his “fantastical but strong imagination” (38). In 1612, the plays at the Fortune rekindled that imagination; inspired by them, Norwood took his engagement with the stage beyond mere spectatorship:

Yea, so far was I affected with these lying vanities that I began to make a play and had written a good part of it. It happened after some time that I fell out with the players at the Fortune (which was the house I frequented) about a seat which they would not admit me to have, whereupon out of anger, and as it were to do them a despite, I came there no more that I remember. (Craven and Hayward 1945, 42)

Norwood’s play – its plot, characters, genre – is a mystery: beyond this reference in his manuscript autobiography, no information about it survives. Because he abandoned the play following a falling out with the players at the Fortune, he may have imagined them specifically staging his work, so perhaps he wrote it with them, and their audience, in mind. If so, it may have been the kind of pseudo-history or city comedy that formed the company’s repertory in those years.

Like Norwood, other playgoers were so deeply “affected” by the plays they saw in the London theaters that they wrote their own plays for those theaters. Some of their plays were rejected by the players, others were accepted but not performed, and yet others were staged, at times to great

acclaim. A few nonprofessionals may have sought to enter the profession, but the majority seem to have been content to limit their efforts to one play only. Norwood, for example, still sought employment on a ship while he wrote his play; likewise, Walter Mountfort was pleading with his former employer – the East India Company – for a return to work even while his *The Launching of the Mary* was being prepared for the stage. Other nonprofessionals, such as Thomas Rawlins, Lewis Sharpe, and Jasper Mayne, openly stated their disinterest in professionalizing.

The intentions of the nonprofessional playwrights are perhaps less important than the position they occupied relative to the stage when they wrote for it. All gained their understanding of the stage exclusively through their experiences as playgoers and play-readers, that is, as consumers of plays, rather than as producers. Unlike most professionals, they did not learn their craft by first working as actors or by collaborative writing as an apprentice to an established professional. Professional dramatists were professional because they underwent such informal training of one kind or another, worked as regular, internal members of the industry, and gained experience from consistently plotting, writing, and revising in response to the needs of the actors, Master of the Revels, and audience. Nonprofessional playwrights wrote for the commercial stage but without the training and opportunity to gain experience within the industry enjoyed by professionals. These nonprofessionals have more in common with the courtly dramatists who supplied plays to the players for performance at Court and the indoor playhouses. Even in this case, however, a distinction must be made, for aristocratic amateurs wrote primarily to gain social prestige or political influence; for the nonaristocratic nonprofessionals, such motivations were less important – certainly they had less leisure time to pursue their writing and lacked the financial means to underwrite performances of their plays. Working-class nonprofessionals such as Norwood may not have had the same regular access to the playhouse that professional playwrights had, or the same ease of access that aristocratic amateurs could obtain, but their occasional appearance speaks to the degree to which even the common citizenry might become participants in play-making in the commercial playhouse.

The known number of nonaristocratic amateurs who wrote plays intended for, or, in the author's mind, imagined upon, the professional stage is small, but may have been substantially larger than the surviving evidence indicates. In 1640, nonprofessional playwright Lewis Sharpe noted that even “[t]he brisk shop's foreman undertakes with's ell / To sound the depth of Aganippe's well” (1640, sig. A4v). In his commendatory verse for Richard Brome's *The Northern Lass* (1629), Ben Jonson complained, with anxious hyperbole, “Both learned and unlearned, all write plays” (1632, sig. A3). As G. E. Bentley disparagingly shrugs, “In a time of great dramatic activity, more plays than we now know were probably written by totally untalented amateurs [who] never ... looked to the commercial theatres for a living” (1986, 23–5). Regardless of their slim survival rate, the plays of these writers merit closer scrutiny for what they can reveal about how outsiders to the theater industry thought about it and how it operated. They also demonstrate that writers need not have intended to make a living in the commercial theaters in order to write for them. And while some professionals dismissed nonprofessionals as dilettantes who, as Richard Brome sneered, “write / less for [the audience's] pleasure than their own delight” (1653, sig. N4v), most cared a considerable amount about the theatrical effectiveness and reception of their work.

Plays by these nonprofessionals can sometimes provide clues about professionals' plays, or parts of those plays, that particularly appealed to or resonated with audiences. An intriguing example of this is found in the play *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. The 1601 quarto identifies Robert Yarrington as the author. Not finding any professional playwright with that name, E. K. Chambers ([1923] 1961, 3: 518), following a guess by W. W. Greg (1908, 2: 208–9), assumed

that Yarrington was the scribe who copied out the manuscript from which the quarto was printed and that the play was actually an adaptation by Henry Chettle of two plays written for the Admiral's Men in 1599–1600: *Thomas Merry*, or *Beech's Tragedy*, by John Day and William Haughton, and Chettle's *The Orphan's Tragedy*. However, it would be counterintuitive for the company to, within the year, combine plays that bear only a thin thematic connection and allow that combination then to be published. It seems more probable that the two plays inspired Yarrington, one of their spectators, to pen a new play that was written inexpertly but with a concern for theatricality.

In November 1603, Yarrington obtained his freedom of the Company of Scriveners, making him a young man in 1601, at the time the play was published (Wagner 1930). Young amateur playwrights writing inept imitations of professional plays were not uncommon (as with, for example, William Peaps's *Love in Its Ecstasy*, 1649, written c.1634; Francis Verney's *Tragedy of Antipo*, 1603–4; and Abraham Cowley's *Love's Riddle*, 1638). Greg's and subsequent scholars' desire to assign *Two Lamentable Tragedies* to Chettle and so maintain the authority of the profession hinges upon the assumption that a non-aristocrat was unlikely to write a play closely associated with the commercial theater. In addition to a lack of positive evidence against Yarrington's authorship of the play, scholars have raised other challenges to Greg's theory. For example, Robert Law disputes the idea that the play is a merging of works by different authors and instead finds in the two plots one "bungling, inexperienced hand" (1910, 172). He suggests that, based on the play's debts to *Richard III* and *King Leir* and its "exceedingly crude ... form," *Two Lamentable Tragedies* was the work of "some obscure hanger-on at the theatres" (167, 176). S. R. Golding likewise argues that it is the work of "a mere novice in the dramatic art, one who was perhaps a keen student of the works of Marlowe and of Kyd" (1926, 348). The most probable scenario is that sometime between early 1600 and 1601, Robert Yarrington, apprentice scribe and frequent Rose playgoer, wrote a play by borrowing from two plays he had seen the Admiral's Men perform and which he had enjoyed. Because there is no evidence that Day, Haughton, or Chettle wrote the play, the most likely solution is that the man whose name appears on the quarto was the man who wrote the play. Besides the scribe, several other individuals named "Robert Yarrington" are candidates for the play's author (Orlin 2004), but none was involved in the theater industry; no matter which Yarrington wrote *Lamentable*, then, he was likely not a professional dramatist but a nonprofessional borrowing from two professional plays.

Assuming this, we might revisit in particular the play's peculiar stage directions, seeing in their expansiveness a playgoer's recollection of how similar actions may have been performed by the Admiral's Men in acting *The Orphan's Tragedy* and *Beech's Tragedy*. Yarrington's directions broadcast the play's composition by a writer unfamiliar with the customary forms used for written directions but who was attempting to imitate what he saw when he attended the playhouse. For example, the "numbing theatricality" of the play's extreme violence, such as Merry's bludgeoning of Thomas Winchester with a hammer before leaving it sticking in his head (Yarrington 1601, sig. C4), or his dismembering of Beech (sig. E2), is similar to the "spectacular" bodily mayhem in a number of plays from professional dramatists which show that the actors had adopted particular conventions for such violence (Lopez 2003, 108, 111). The needlessly precise nature of these directions is telling. Merry's murder of Winchester is described specifically: she "strieth six blows on his head and with the seventh leaves the hammer sticking in his head"; when he removes the body parts he "binds the arms behind his back with Beech's garters." Yarrington may have recalled these details in the plays from which he borrowed, but they also betray an ignorance of how stage directions were typically written for professional players.

In fact, such highly detailed stage directions are a regular feature of plays by nonprofessionals, some of whom were naive about the way such stage actions were typically indicated (as in Clavell's *The Soddred Citizen*, c.1630), concerned with the literary reception of their text (as in Barnabe Barnes's *The Devil's Charter*, 1607), or simply suspicious of the actors' ability to portray the business as they wanted (as in Mountfort's *The Launching of the Mary*, 1632). More typical of the professional stage is Yarrington's use of jargon such as "solus," "exeunt," "omnes," and spatial terms such as "within" and "above." Oddly, however, the instruction Yarrington uses for speeches given aside is "to the people." The subtle difference between "aside" or, to use the phrase most popular with professional playwrights in these years, "to himself" (with a perspective on the world of the play), and "to the people" (with a perspective on the world of the playhouse) hints at Yarrington's own physical position within the playhouse audience and his intuitive theatricality.

Another nonprofessional whose stage directions indicate a deliberate, if sometimes misguided consideration of performance context was William Percy, third son of the Earl of Northumberland. Between 1601 and 1604, Percy wrote six plays and over the following years he gradually revised them. Finally, starting in 1636, he began recopying them, in some instances making multiple fair copies of a play. Percy's infatuation with the professional stage can be inferred from a number of pieces of evidence, beginning with his borrowing from many of the plays staged in London, particularly by the boys at St. Paul's in the 1580s and 1590s. At that time, Percy was still a student at Oxford and he frequented the London theaters, particularly St. Paul's (Dodds 1933, 174–5; Dimmock 2006, 55–6). In his plays, however, there seem also to be recollections of business, conventions, playhouse features, and dramatic devices from the professional adult stages, such as the Theater and the Rose. Further evidence of Percy's interest in the professional London stage is found in his unpublished epigrams – collected under the title "One Singular Booke of Epigrammes" in a manuscript volume, dated 1646, held in the Percy archives at Alnwick Castle (Dodds 1931, 57) – in which he refers to reading a play by Dekker (epigram 140), mocks Peele for living in an alehouse in order to get drunk enough to pen a play (epigram 8), and describes – not always accurately – various aspects of theatrical manuscript culture (epigrams 91 and 276). Percy's curiosity about playhouse manuscripts may explain also why two of the extant playbooks from the period – *The Wasp* (1630s, King's Revels) and *John of Bordeaux* (1590, Strange's Men) – were found together in the Percy archives at Alnwick Castle, even though they bear no other relationship to each other (Renwick 1936, v–vi).

Many of Percy's stage directions call upon the producer to make the final choice about actions and materials in order to select what will work best in performance ("Whither the better, you may choose the better," he often notes). Such permissive signals indicate his desire for performance and his willingness to allow producers to make the choices that will render such a performance more likely. Many of the choices he presents involve shaping the plays for different performance contexts: Percy often indicates that an action or material might be one way for adult actors and a different way "if for boys" or "if for Paul's," indicating his hope that the Children of Paul's will stage his plays. In one of his plays, he included a lengthy memorandum to the master at Paul's, offering suggestions on how to cut the length of the performance if any of his plays should prove too long (Dimmock 2006, 55–6). Percy's return to his own plays in the Caroline era speaks to his lasting passion for the professional theater of his younger days, a nostalgia emphasized by the fact that he retained these company-specific stage directions in his 1630s copies even though the Children of Paul's had dissolved in 1608.

Yarrington's reliance upon professionals' plays and Percy's desperation to conform to the expectations of the profession do not represent how every nonprofessional dramatist worked.

Indeed, many broke from the conventions and style of the professionals, sometimes out of ignorance of what was appropriate (as with Yarrington's overwritten stage directions), but at times in deliberate defiance of familiar practices. While nonprofessionals lacked the consistent opportunity to practice their craft that the professionals enjoyed, there is ample evidence that most exercised a degree of care, creativity, and diligence equal to or sometimes surpassing that of the professionals. Such creativity might also be seen in how nonprofessionals chose to diverge from what they, as highly dedicated playgoers, must have known to be customary on the professional stage. Rather than reading such divergence always as a signal of ignorance, we should first consider whether it might be innovation.

An example of this is in *The Swaggering Damsel*, written in the late 1630s by Robert Chamberlain, a clerk to the Queen's Solicitor-General and author of several jest books and some poetry. Which company staged the play is unknown, but it was evidently performed, as one of the quarto's commendatory verses refers to women in the audience for the play's performance. In *The Swaggering Damsel*, Chamberlain knowingly – and “ingeniously and unpredictably” (Hopkins 2004) – transgressed an unspoken theatrical code by making the plot hinge upon a radical staging choice: in the play, Sabina disguises herself as a man in order to trick her beloved into marrying her – standard fare for plays of the period. The reason she resorts to such a trick, however, is because her beloved, the fickle Valentine, has attempted to elude her by disguising himself as a woman – not such standard fare. Indeed, in a theater without female actors, a male character disguising himself convincingly as a woman confuses the line between the fiction of the world of the play and the reality of the play's all-male performance; thus, professional dramatists only rarely attempted the device. When they do, the effect is either purposefully hyperbolic – as in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (c.1597) – or the very reason for the play's failure – as with Jonson's *Epicoene* (1609). Because professional dramatists almost never resorted to this device, we might be tempted to claim that audiences did not want it or even that they could not understand it. *The Swaggering Damsel*, however, suggests that, whether or not his play succeeded, at least one spectator was curious about the comic, thematic, and narrative potential of a device that deliberately infringed upon generally recognized stage practices and which he was unlikely to see in professionals' plays.

Other nonprofessionals display a similar willingness to defy fashion in ways that professional dramatists did not, or would not. For example, sometime between 1632 and 1639, lawyer Alexander Brome wrote *The Cunning Lovers*, which was staged by the boys' company at the Cockpit and evidently held some value to them since it was included in the list of plays that the Lord Chamberlain protected for them in 1639 (Bentley 1941–68, 3: 48). Bentley claimed that there is “nothing to connect [Brome] with the stage or theatrical affairs” and therefore his name on the quarto might simply be “a misattribution” (3: 48), but Brome was steeped in Caroline theatrical culture: in 1638 he wrote a poem of praise for Suckling's *Aglaura*, in 1642 he wrote an elegy, filled with theatrical references, upon Suckling's death, and he contributed commendatory verses to the 1647 Fletcher and Beaumont folio, the 1651 Cartwright collection, and 1652 quarto of Richard Brome's *Jovial Crew*. He put his familiarity with Caroline drama to use in assembling two collections of plays by Richard Brome (in 1653 and 1659). Furthermore, his nondramatic poetry incorporates numerous explicit references to theater. Brome's *Songs and Poems* includes a poem of praise for Lodowick Carlell's *The Passionate Lovers* (written in 1638 but not printed until

1655), in which he lays out the importance of sustaining England's dramatic tradition by publishing plays while the theaters are closed:

So though we've lost the life of plays, the stage,
If we can be remembrancers to th' age
And now and then let glow a spark in print,
To tell the world there's fire still lodg'd i'th' flint,
We may again b' enlightened once and warm'd.

(A. Brome 1661, sig. S6v)

It is no surprise, then, that in 1654 Brome published his own play, which he had written fifteen years earlier, when the theaters were still open.

While Brome participated in Caroline dramatic culture, the Jacobean and Elizabethan stage held a special fascination for him: references in his poetry to Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays (1590–1), *The Blind Beggar of Bednal Green* (1600), *Sejanus* (1603), *A Mad World My Masters* (1605), *Volpone* (1606), and *Catiline* (1611) are supplemented by allusions in his play to *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *1 Henry IV* (1596), *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* (1603), and *Greene's Tu Quoque* (1611). Like Percy, Brome was a playgoer deeply influenced by and nostalgic for English theatrical traditions of an earlier age. In the work of those earlier dramatists, for example, Brome found a model for dramatic verse unlike the loose, unrhymed lines used by Caroline professionals. While Brome's *The Cunning Lovers* is a topical match with what the boys were staging at the Cockpit in 1639 (plays such as *The Lady's Trial*, *Argalus and Parthenia*, and *Wit in a Constable*), the poetry of Brome's play is markedly antiquated, particularly in its use of rhyme. Brome may have found generic inspiration for his play on the Caroline stage, but he looked to his Elizabethan forebears for prosodic inspiration, thus writing something that would have been, on the stage at the Cockpit in 1639, simultaneously old-fashioned and innovative.

Whether complying with professional practices or defying them, if nonprofessionals wished to see their plays staged, they would still have to conform to the usual collaborative processes of production in the commercial playhouse. Two plays by nonprofessionals provide evidence of how someone from outside of the industry might participate with the industry in order to obtain a performance. Walter Mountfort wrote *The Launching of the Mary* in 1632, on board an East India Company ship during a year-long voyage from his post as a Company clerk in Persia back to London. The manuscript (British Library MS Egerton 1994, fols. 317–49) bears evidence of the journey – ink fading from salt in the air, water stains from sea-spray, and grubby tar and oakum fingerprints, as well as occasional corrections and *currente calamo* revisions. After Mountfort's arrival in London in April 1633 he supplied the manuscript to a company – probably the second Prince Charles's Men at either the Red Bull or Salisbury Court – which paid Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, to license the play in June 1633. Following this, the company had Mountfort return to the play and make a further round of revisions to address passages that Herbert had struck out. Finally, the bookkeeper of the company took his pen to the play and, likely with input from the players, made some final changes; these were mostly cuts and, judging from the state in which he left the play, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the troupe ultimately abandoned the project.

Because of Mountfort's status as an outsider to the industry, it is often and without evidence asserted that he wrote his play for amateur players. His position with the East India Company has led some scholars to guess that the play was meant as propaganda for the Company and was

therefore intended for a private performance for Company officials and guests. However, no record exists of such a performance or payment for the play's composition in the Company's otherwise thorough records. Furthermore, written at time when Mountfort was experiencing considerable tension with his employers, the play – particularly the subplot – actually critiques the Company's policies toward its employees and their wives. Finally, the Master of the Revels did not license plays for private performances. *Launching of the Mary* was likely prepared for the stage by a professional troupe, something that Mountfort evidently envisioned when he wrote the play. In one long and awkward stage direction, Mountfort gives up trying to describe what he would like staged and merely reports that what he wants “shall be showed before / the day of action,” implying that he will be involved with the play's preparation for the stage (Walter 1933, ll. 2674–5). This passing statement, along with explicit references to the audience in the prologue and epilogue, indicates Mountfort's intention that his play should see the stage, though which troupe he was thinking of when he wrote is unclear. When he left London in March 1629, the second Prince Charles's Men did not yet exist, but other troupes were staging the kind of city comedies he clearly knew and admired: Mountfort's *Dorothea Constance*, for example, seems based upon the barmaid Bess from Heywood's *1 The Fair Maid of the West*, a play he could have seen on stage (it was acted by the Queen Anne's Men around 1604 and later by Queen Henrietta's Men), but probably never read since it was only published in 1631, while he was in Persia. He may also have known from performance Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, a play first staged by the Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Swan in 1613 but not printed until 1630, while he was in Persia.

Other plays, however, were available to Mountfort in print before his voyage; for example, the five convivial, amateur-playmaking shipyard workers are modeled upon the “rude mechanicals” of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (first staged by the Chamberlain's, later King's, Men around 1595–6 and printed in 1600, 1619, and 1623). Mountfort gives evidence of knowing many other plays, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *1 Henry IV*, as well as Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Heywood's *Henry IV* plays, Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, and the collaboratively written *Eastward Ho!* Given Mountfort's interest in the public stage and the fact that his play ended up in the hands of a London troupe, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that when he wrote the play, the nonprofessional fully intended that it should be performed by professional players.

John Clavell also likely wrote his *The Soddered Citizen* (1629–30) to be staged by a professional troupe. Clavell's father had died in 1623 and left the young man in financial straits, so he took up the trade of highwayman. Captured and convicted to hang, the imprisoned Clavell wrote a lengthy poem, *A Recantation of an Ill Led Life*, just before being released from prison as part of the general amnesty during the coronation in 1625. *A Recantation* proved immensely popular and gained the interest of King Charles, who gave, as the title-page states, “express command” for its publication in 1628. Shortly after, his play *The Soddered Citizen* was in the hands of the King's Men, who prepared it for the stage and presumably performed it. The manuscript of *The Soddered Citizen* is in the hand of Edward Knight, the King's Men's scribe, and is marked by five other hands, including Clavell's. Although there is no indication of censorship on the extant copy, the inclusion of a cast list assigning roles to members of the King's Men of 1629–30 indicates that a performance was prepared.

Just as scholars often relegate Mountfort's *Launching* to an amateur performance context, Clavell's *Soddered Citizen* is often dismissed as a piece “commissioned” and “cajoled” from Clavell by the players to “exploit” his fame as a reformed thief (Bentley 1941–68, 3: 162–5). As with Mountfort's play, there is no evidence for this assertion and in fact the play makes very little reference to Clavell's notorious history: the prologue briefly refers to the author's life of crime and

at one point the character Mountain is described as a highwayman driven to thievery by the loss of his family fortune but who, pardoned by the king, turns to poetry. Knight, however, deleted even this – hardly what would be expected if the players wished to emphasize Clavell’s criminal career. The assumption that it was the King’s Men who approached Clavell for a play overlooks the nonprofessional’s interest in the theater in general and the King’s Men in particular. In his *Recantation*, for example, Clavell praises “the strain / Of [the] Blackfriars poets” (1628, sig. B3).

Bentley assumed also that the play’s clumsiness embarrassed the King’s Men and alienated the nonprofessional from them (1941–68, 3: 165); certainly the fact that Clavell took the manuscript with him when he moved to Ireland suggests that the play did not remain in their repertory, but he seems to have maintained a positive relationship with the King’s Men and the profession more broadly. In 1632, he was invited by the King’s Men to provide a commendatory verse to *The Emperor of the East*, a play by their regular professional dramatist and his “dear friend” Philip Massinger (Clavell 1632, sig. A3v). In the poem, as in his *Recantation*, Clavell describes still attending plays at Blackfriars. He became friends with other dramatists as well, including Shakerley Marmion and even that consummate professional, Ben Jonson. Even when he was in Ireland, Clavell built relationships with the nascent theater there, writing prologues and epilogues for the professional Dublin stage and even a masque for a Christmas celebration. While it may strike modern readers as surprising that the prestigious King’s Men should consider performing an awkward play like *The Soddered Citizen*, it should come as no surprise that such an engaged and dedicated playgoer would try his hand at writing for the London stage.

Not all nonprofessional dramatists were as fortunate as Clavell. Bentley is surely correct in his speculation that “a fair number of amateur plays [that were] offered to the London acting companies [were] rejected by them” (1986, 79). Perhaps some of these survive among the many anonymous plays printed in the period; many, no doubt, were simply lost. Only one extant non-professional play presents explicit evidence of such a rejection. *Adrasta, or The Woman’s Spleen and Love’s Conquest* (1635) was written by John Jones, about whom nothing is known except that he was evidently a university student at the time he wrote the play. In his epistle to readers, Jones explains that he had “fitted [the play] for the stage [and] intended to have had there the Promethean fire of action infus’d into it”; the playhouse, he rhapsodizes, is “that noble nursery of action, where dramatic poems usually and rightly take their degrees of applause from them that can best judge, the spectators” (1635, sig. A2). Despite being praised by academics and actors, however, *Adrasta* was not to enter that noble nursery: “the players, upon a slight and half view of it, refus’d to do it,” probably, Jones guesses, because they felt “it had not in it so much witchcraft in poetry as now ’tis known the stage will bear” (sig. A2–v). The play then went “again . . . under the file” and, due both to the insistence of friends and financial necessity, Jones published that revised version (sig. A2v). A hint of Jones’s love of the theater and identification as a nonprofessional playmaker in a professional playmaking context can be seen in the play’s induction, in which an audience member interrupts the prologue, complains about the play the actors have chosen, and departs into the tiring-house to provide them with a more suitable script (Pangallo 2013, 52–3).

While *Adrasta* failed to appear on stage, some plays by nonprofessionals enjoyed considerable success in the London playhouses. Even in these instances, however, the playwrights still did not capitalize upon their achievement by pursuing a career writing for the stage. Instead, they remained content as participatory consumers rather than mainstream producers of culture. Thomas Rawlins, for example, made an explicit effort to refute the idea that, given the theatrical success of his *The Rebellion* (1636?), he might become a regular dramatist. *The Rebellion* was staged by the King’s Revels at Salisbury Court and created a sensation, running for nine straight days and reappearing in the company’s repertory until its publication in 1640. In his letter to

readers, Rawlins states, misleadingly, as it turned out, “Take no notice of my name, for a second work of this nature shall hardly bear it. I have no desire to be known by a threadbare cloak, having a calling that will maintain it woolly. Farewell” (1640, sig. A2v). The “calling” that was enough to keep him in a “woolly” cloak was as a laborer, engraving for the Royal Mint. Not surprisingly, his play glorifies the working class.

Like so many other nonprofessional playwrights, Rawlins was deeply familiar with the professional theater. The commendatory verses attached to his play, as well as those he contributed to others’ plays, reveal his membership in a “distinct self-conscious group” (Butler 1984, 185) of actors and professional and nonprofessional playwrights who praised and promoted one another’s plays. Not only did Rawlins write commendatory poems for the works of others in this group, but for Nathaniel Richards’ play *Messalina* (1640) he also put his skills as a draughtsman to work and contributed to the title-page a sketch of the Salisbury Court playhouse, which speaks to his familiarity with the venue’s architecture. *The Rebellion* itself offers further evidence of Rawlins’ theatrical knowledge and interests: in addition to mocking the customary makeup techniques used for staging ghosts, the play refers to *King Lear*, and echoes *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; it also borrows from Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*, and mocks two Fortune actors, the bombastic Richard Fowler and the corpulent Golding. Playgoing even enters the action of the play itself when the politician Machvile takes for his murderous cue what he learned as someone who (evidently like Rawlins) became “ravis’d” with the stage as an attendee of “the commonwealth of players” (Rawlins 1640, sig. E4v). Also in the play, a group of patriotic tailors rehearse a play with which they intend to honor the king; in the rehearsal, the amateur playmakers display considerable knowledge of the London theater industry, its companies, its actors and their styles, and their audiences. While providing comic relief, these thespian laborers also recall their own author: a member of the working class with a passion for the stage, both as consumer and producer. Finally, and most demonstrative of Rawlins’ attachment to the stage, he ultimately belied his own promise not to write “a second worke of this nature.” During the Restoration, his *Tom Essence, or The Modish Life*, and his *Tunbridge Wells, or A Day’s Courtship*, were both staged by professional players at Dorset Garden. In the dedication of his 1654 translation of Thomas Corneille’s *The Extravagant Shepherd*, he remarks that the play would “have enter’d the theater had not the guilty ones of this age broken that mirror lest they should there behold their own horrible shapes represented” (Rawlins 1654, sig. A2). Rawlins’ 1636 claim that he was disinterested in writing further plays should not be taken at face value; we should also, therefore, approach with skepticism his self-deprecating claim in *The Rebellion* that he suffered from an “ignorance of the stage” (1640, sig. A2).

Shortly after Rawlins’ *The Rebellion*, Lewis Sharpe’s romantic comedy *The Noble Stranger* (1638–40) was also staged with considerable success at the Salisbury Court by Queen Henrietta’s Men. In his dedicatory epistle, Sharpe reports that the play “was received generally well upon the stage” and Richard Woolfall’s commendatory poem confirms that “[*The*] *Noble Stranger*, / With pleasing strains has smooth’d the rugged fate / Of oft cram’d theatres and prov’d fortunate” (Sharpe 1640, sigs. A3, A4). The end of Sharpe’s dedication voices the disinterest in professionalizing typical of nonprofessionals, but, as with Rawlins, we must be careful not to read that as suggesting also a disinterest in the professional theater. He makes it clear that, though he has no intention of professionalizing, he enjoys attending professionals’ plays: “As for the name of poet, it is a style I never aimed at (though afar off I have admired their sacred raptures)” (sig. A3v). While Sharpe may have had no intention of becoming a professional playwright, his play shows that he was deeply committed to and interested in the stage.

In his prologue, Sharpe displays his knowledge of the company for whom he was writing and the venue in which they were to perform (see Bentley 1941–68, 5: 1051 and 6: 93). David Stevens notes specific dramaturgical features of the play that deliberately employed “production practices [used] at the Salisbury Court” (1979, 514). In writing his play, Sharpe borrowed from the theatrical traditions of his day for plot devices, generic conventions, characters, language, and prosody. He even included a subtle jab at the most outspoken of the professional playwrights, Ben Jonson, by having the fool Pupillus, imagining himself as “a confident, poetical wit,” blusteringly complain about the audience and deliver a line from the self-congratulatory epilogue to Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels* (1600): “This from our author I was bid to say, / ‘By Jove ’tis good and if you lik’t you may” (Sharpe 1640, sig. G3v).

A number of nonprofessional playwrights from amateur performance contexts, such as the universities and great halls, succeeded where John Jones failed and saw professional players stage their plays. In many of these instances, the amateur dramatist, although not a regular participant in the industry, remained connected with his play in the professional playhouse, sometimes revising it for the players or adding new material. For example, Richard Lovelace provided a new prologue and epilogue when his (now lost) 1634 Oxford play *The Scholars* was staged by the Queen Henrietta’s Men at Salisbury Court around 1638. Jasper Mayne (1639, sig. A2) wrote his romantic comedy *The City Match* for Charles’s 1636 visit to Oxford, but in 1638 it appeared in the repertory of the King’s Men, where it gained, according to stationer Leonard Litchfield, a great “reputation” as one of “the best things” in the capital. Mayne wrote prologues and epilogues for the King’s Men performances of his play at Blackfriars and at Court, and he may have made other revisions for the changed performance auspices. He evidently retained some control over his work after the King’s Men obtained it, and he clearly took some pride in the play – even though he assured the Whitehall audience that he was “not of th’ trade” (1639, sig. A2v) – because he saw to its publication in 1639 and 1659, as well as the printing of his unacted play *The Amorous War*, in 1648, 1658, and 1659. Litchfield claimed that, “As it was merely out of obedience that [Mayne] first wrote it, so when it was made, had it not been commanded from him, it had died upon the place where it took life,” but the nonprofessional’s interest in publishing his plays suggests at least some desire to keep his work alive (Mayne 1639, sig. A2). While Mayne was careful to distinguish himself from the professional playmakers “who eat by th’ stage” (sig. B1), as with Sharpe and Rawlins, his play still shows a studied interest in and awareness of the professional theater in which his academic play ultimately appeared. Later, when he was attacked by Puritans for dabbling in drama, Mayne wrote proudly of being a “poet” whose work appeared “upon the stage at Blackfriars,” an achievement he considered equivalent to his work “in any university book here in Oxford” (1647, sig. D4v).

Amateur dramatists from domains besides the academic might also see their plays end up in the hands of professional players. For example, in his 1644–9 autobiography, Arthur Wilson, clerk to Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, recalls being in his younger days in the early 1630s the “contriver both of words and matter” for the “masques or plays” that Devereux sponsored for the entertainment of his family and friends (qtd. in Bentley 1941–68, 5: 1268); several of those plays became part of the King’s Men’s repertory and contain hints that Wilson was influenced by the stage when he wrote them. Presumably he provided the players with copies, but there is no evidence suggesting that when he did so he was attempting to enter the profession. Indeed, in his autobiography his attitude toward the commercial stage is one of intense engagement as a consumer but reluctance to become one of its producers. Despite this, most of his plays proved popular enough with public audiences, and thus with the King’s Men, to realize active lives on

stage for nearly a quarter of a century (see Bentley 1941–68, 5: 1271–2). The transfer of Wilson’s, Lovelace’s, and Mayne’s plays from the amateur to the professional stage provides evidence of the degree of fluidity between the two dramatic domains in the period.

There are also nonprofessional playwrights whose plays survive and include evidence of performance or intended performance but about whom we know nothing. In some instances, an individual who wrote for the stage but who is not otherwise known to have been associated with the industry may have been attempting to professionalize and simply, for one reason or another, failed. In other instances, however, the nonprofessional playwright might have been a nonprofessional simply uninterested in entering the profession at all. As with Rawlins, Sharpe, and Mayne, however, this desire to stay out of the profession does not mean that their plays lack a particular consumer’s understanding of the theater, even if the nonprofessional was not always successful at translating that understanding into an effective script. A good example of this is the anonymous, undated manuscript play *The Cyprian Conqueror* (British Library MS Sloane 3709), written by an author who identifies himself as “a country man” who has “[i]n this play done what he can” even though playwriting “is not his skill” (fol. 49v). We can assume that he was a member of playhouse audiences because in his preface he reflects on plays that are “well performed in our English theaters” and celebrates “the great good that may accrue to the diligent spectators and auditors at plays” (fols. 4v, 5v). Although W. W. Greg and Bentley assumed that, since it was written by an amateur, the play was never staged (Greg [1931] 1969, 1: 364–5; Bentley 1986, 24; see also Bentley 1941–68, 5: 1316–7), the dramatist clearly expected a performance, remarking that “others must act [this play] for me,” offering his “good will for the deed” of performing it, and hoping that “what is wanting in it . . . those eloquent tongues of the actors will not be defective in” (fol. 5v). Plays must be performed and not merely read, he argues, because “action” has “the greatest of winning force” and “a power of so much efficaciousness”: “it is the eloquence of the body by which the mind hath a generous impression, so that the voice, hands, and eyes are made the instruments of eloquence” (fol. 5v). The prologue also expresses his hope that the play will enter a company’s repertory: “The poet makes and we shall act a play, / Which, if ye like’t, ye’ll hav’t another day” (fol. 9). *The Cyprian Conqueror* was evidently “like’t” for it does appear to have been staged “another day.”

A second prologue – not remarked upon by either Greg or Bentley – hints that the play was staged for paying spectators. In this prologue, the actors confess that this “last day” they performed a play and “we money took . . . / For which inform’d Master of Revels is” (fol. 9v). Like Mountfort and other nonprofessionals who saw their plays staged by the players, the “country man” was likely involved with these performances (the extant manuscript is a scribal copy, but the author made revisions in it). In his preface, he also describes some of the specific actions and even vocal qualities the actors should use in performing the different characters. Whether or not the players followed these detailed instructions, or whether he included them in his copy precisely because they did not follow them, we unfortunately cannot know. Nonetheless, their inclusion at all suggests the degree to which an outsider to the theater industry might hope to be involved with the staging of his play, and they provide evidence of the kinds of actions and voices an audience member expected to see and hear associated with particular character types.

Like the “country man” who wrote *The Cyprian Conqueror*, William Rider wrote a play that received a professional performance but about whom we know nothing else. The title-page of the 1655 quarto of Rider’s tragicomedy *The Twins* states that it had been staged with success by either Queen Henrietta’s Men or the second Prince Charles’s Men at Salisbury Court, probably

sometime between 1629 and 1642. The quarto bears no other evidence about its performance, but it does include a highly explanatory *dramatis personae* list and elaborate stage directions, two features common to nonprofessionals' plays. Because Rider is described on the title-page as a Master of Arts, and because it seemed to them unlikely that someone outside the industry could write a play that would receive "general applause," earlier scholars assumed that the play must have originated elsewhere. Gerard Langbaine thought the play "older far than the date of [the quarto] imports" (1691, 427), implying that Rider wrote it initially while at university, though this overlooks the fact that, while professional playwrights had to write on the cutting edge of style in order to remain viable, many nonprofessionals' plays – such as Alexander Brome's *The Cunning Lovers* and Jaques's *The Queen of Corsica* – often looked back to earlier dramatic styles with the nostalgia we might expect from a long-time consumer of plays. F. G. Fleay (1891, 2: 170) guessed, for no real reason, that the play was the lost *The Twins' Tragedy* that the King's Men had staged in 1612, ignoring the fact that Rider's play is a tragicomedy, not a tragedy; even *The Twins' Tragedy* was evidently written by a nonprofessional, since its apparent author, Richard Niccols, though a prominent poet, did not write any other plays. Given the number of other nonprofessionals whose plays were staged at Salisbury Court in the 1630s, the simplest explanation is to take the title-page at face value and conclude that the nonprofessional Rider wrote his play for that professional stage.

In factoring these nonprofessionals into our understanding of the early modern stage, three ramifications, among many, deserve consideration. First, for scholars working to assign authors to the period's anonymous plays, such a tremendous and unrecoverable population of potential writers poses significant and underappreciated problems. This is particularly true given nonprofessionals like Yarrington, Percy, and Norwood, who were influenced by and writing in emulation of a particular professional playwright or company repertory. Language, structure, theatrical conventions, generic devices, and other elements often used as evidence in attribution studies might in these nonprofessionals' plays resemble professionals' plays that they admired and from which they learned. Furthermore, while there is no evidence of a nonprofessional writing collaboratively with a professional, some, such as Mountfort, were involved with the preparation of their plays for the stage, meaning that attempts to apportion existing plays among a collaborative group of known authors must also come up against the variable of the nonprofessionals. Such a vast body of potential and now-vanished authors amplifies, perhaps to a depressing degree, the margin of error in any attribution study.

Knowing that nonprofessional playwrights could write for the professional stage and even obtain performance should also compel us to be more cautious in categorizing plays written by amateurs as "closet drama" only. Most of the nonprofessionals' plays that were staged or prepared for the stage display many of the same characteristics of awkward dialogue, lengthy speeches, and overly descriptive stage directions that have often been used to identify other plays as works meant for readers. Nonprofessionals' plays that in their prologues, epilogues, or stage directions imply or expect performance should not be dismissed as merely imitating conventional verbal forms in the plays those authors would have read. After all, such an imitation may have been meant for performance purposes just as much as for readers. To put it another way, the existence of the nonprofessional playwrights whose works did appear on, or almost appear on, the commercial stages should make us more cautious in assigning overly literary plays by other known nonprofessionals to the ranks of "closet drama" simply because they were written by nonprofessionals.

Finally, and perhaps more hopefully, there is what these writers can do for our understanding of how playgoers in the period saw and thought about the professional stage. Their position

outside of the playmaking industry means that nonprofessional dramatists held a different perspective on that industry than that held by the dramatists within it. Similar to modern-day writers of “fan fiction,” their texts speak to a consumer’s understanding of, and bid to participate in, cultural production; in this they offer a view of the theater through the eyes of the audience rather than the playmakers. Because of this perspective, the kinds of questions that we can fairly and usefully ask of their plays differ from what we ask of plays by professionals. Rather than demonstrating what did happen in the playhouse, plays by nonprofessionals signal what members of the audience thought happened. Professionals’ plays require us to deduce audience demand, understanding, and desire, but nonprofessionals’ plays demonstrate audience members’ demands, understanding, and desires directly. Plays by these writers can reveal what audience members wanted to see and, in their attempts to replicate or deviate from practices, conventions, and techniques found in professionals’ plays, how they thought actors would or should go about staging them.

In this way, nonprofessionals’ plays offer a fresh repository of evidence for recovering the experiences and expectations of particular early modern playgoers. They also remind us that the relationship between the professional stage and its audience was potentially quite interactive and open to consumers’ participatory engagement in the process of playmaking.

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Index

- Abbott, George 67
- abuse, sexual 128
- accounting records 323–327
- acoustics 60, 199–200, 261–262, 276
- acting practice 250, 256–265
- actors
- celebrated 203–205
 - dual consciousness of actor and character 279
 - players bonds 106
 - “sides” 202
 - Spanish Wars 225–226
 - vagrants 120–122
 - wealth 204–205
 - see also individual actors*; performance; historically informed performance
- Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds 113, 329
- “actress effect” 290
- Acts and Monuments* (“Foxe’s Book of Martyrs”) 146, 185, 380
- Adams, Henry Hitch 391–392
- adiaphora* 148
- Admiral’s Men 61, 231, 241–246, 305, 329, 333, 379, 535, 553, 557
- playhouses used 215, 220
 - principal actors 201, 203, 206–208
 - performances 201–203, 390, 600
 - use of boy actors 208
 - see also* Philip Henslowe; Prince Henry’s Men
- Adrasta* (Jones) 605
- adultery 118, 133–136, 388–390, 400, 460–461
- advertisements 242–243
- aesthetic nervousness 494, 495–496
- Aglaoura* (Suckling) 602
- Alchemist, The* (Jonson) 129, 160–161, 176, 503, 513, 521, 524
- alchemy 159–162
- aldermen, of London 79–80
- Alleyn, Edward
- career 84, 203–204, 239, 244, 300, 304
 - companies 242
 - delivery 200–201
 - Doctor Faustus* 198
 - playhouses 215, 220, 222, 223
 - voice 200
 - see also* Lord Admiral’s Men
- All’s Well That Ends Well* (Shakespeare) 164–165
- amateur dramatics 607–608
- Anatomie of the Abuses in England* (Stubbes) 59, 112–113, 186, 187, 189
- anatomy 165–166
- Anatomy of Melancholy, The* (Burton) 166
- Anatomy of the World, An* (Donne) 166

- Anglicanism 143
- Anne (Anna) of Denmark, Queen Consort 204–205, 312, 330, 358, 364
- Antbropometamorphosis* (Bulwer) 478
- antimasques 135, 313, 358, 362, 469
- Antipodes, The* (Brome) 56, 93, 551
- antitheatricity 182–192
- catharsis 188–189
 - Catholicism 187–188
 - contagion 183–189
 - moral reformers 184–189
 - onstage 190–191
 - pamphlets 183, 185–189
 - prejudice 47–49
 - religion 183–188
 - sexuality and queerness 447–448
 - xenophobia 189
- Antonio's Revenge* (Marston) 231, 246, 274, 405, 406–409, 411
- Antonius* (Mary Sidney) 579–583
- Antony and Cleopatra* (Shakespeare) 371, 462, 480, 577, 581
- Apologie of the Citie of London* 78, 337
- Apology for Actors* (Heywood) 188, 276
- Apology of the Commons 17
- Apology for Poetry, An* (Philip Sidney) 409–410
- apprentices, clashes with gentlemen 61, 80–81
- Araygnement of Paris, The* (Peele) 330
- archaeology 195, 214–218, 222, 316
- Arches of Triumph* (Harrison) 317
- Arden of Faversham* (anon.) 53, 377, 388–395, 399
- Arden, Thomas 377, 389, 392–393
- Ariosto, Ludovico 28, 32
- aristocracy 322–336
- marriage 132
 - masques 287–288
 - published female writers 576–597
 - REED project 322–324
 - women 287–288
 - see also* great households; progresses
- Aristophanes 43, 48
- Aristotle 67, 127, 154–157, 165, 188, 479, 515, 516
- Armada, Spanish 13–14, 241, 373
- Arte of English Poesie, The* (Puttenham) 36
- artifacts, provenance 530–531
- Art of Rhetorique* (Wilson) 183–184
- Astley, Sir John 233
- astrology 157–159, 163, 171, 175
- astronomy 157–159, 167, 168
- Astrophil and Stella* (Philip Sidney) 25, 28
- As You Like It* (Shakespeare) 28, 190, 449, 513, 524
- audiences
- capacities 197
 - envisioning 196–199
 - galleries 212
 - participation 198–199
 - women 289
- aural culture 199–200, 328, 366 *see also* acoustics
- authors *see individual authors*
- Awdeley, John 117–118
- Bach, Rebecca Ann 449–450
- Bacon, Francis 19, 155, 167, 314, 359, 363, 404, 406, 491–492
- Bale, John 47–48, 185, 328
- ballet de cour* 309, 364
- Bancroft, Richard 23, 146–147
- Barber Surgeons College charter 166
- Barbican Centre, The 255–256
- barter 101–102
- Bartholemew Fair* (Jonson) 59, 89–90, 182–183, 222, 463, 503, 513, 534–535
- Barton, John 255–256
- Barton, Robert 89
- Battle of Alcazar, The* (Peele) 244, 372, 405, 474–475
- Bear Garden, the 222
- Beaufort, Margaret 330
- Beaumont, Francis 55, 61, 246–247, 277, 421, 426, 532, 547, 553, 556, 602 *see also individual works*
- Beeston, Christopher 61–62, 204, 221, 223, 233, 247, 278–279, 288
- Beeston, William 224
- Beeston's Boys 247
- Belchier, Daubridgescourt 92–93
- Believe as You List* (Massinger) 229, 547, 549
- Bell in Campo* (Cavendish) 588, 589
- Bell Savage (playhouse) 213, 218, 228, 288
- Benger, Sir Thomas 268
- Bennett, Elizabeth 175, 178
- Bennett, Jane 534
- Best, George 476–477
- Bible
- Bishops' 23
 - Elizabeth I 340, 456, 458
 - Geneva 23, 151
 - "Great" Bible 145

- Bible (*cont'd*)
 interpretation 23
 King James 16, 151
 reading habits 147, 151–152
 revenge tragedy 404
 secular plays 47–48
- Bird, William 106, 204
- Black Book*, Edward IV 323–325
- Blackfriars (playhouse) 60, 62, 76, 218–220, 221, 223, 232, 246, 271–277 *see also* Children of Blackfriars; Children of the Chapel; King's Men
- Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, Virginia 211, 262
- blackness *see* race
- Blagrave, William 223–224, 278–279
- bloodletting 163–164
- Blount, Charles, Lord Mountjoy 14
- Blount, Edward 54, 567–568, 570–571
- Boar's Head (playhouse) 212, 218, 245–246, 289 *see also* Derby's Men
- Boke Named the Governour* (Elyot) 92
- bonds
 conditional 104–105
 credit economy 102
 forbearance 105
The Merchant of Venice 108–109
 penal 80, 104–105
 theatrical business 106–108
see also debt
- Book of Common Prayer 145, 151
- Book of the Courtier, The* (Castiglione) 25, 28, 30, 515, 517
- “book keeper/holders” 202
- books
 creation 547–549
 history 531–532
 nonprofessional playwrights 598–611
 prices 556
 printing 552–557, 561
 publishers (*see* publishing)
 women in print 576–597
- books of ordinances 323–327
- Book of Sports* 59
- borrowing *see* bonds; debt
- Bourdieu, Pierre 522
- boy(s)
 female impersonation 207–209, 447–448
 gendering 464–465
 puberty 208
 training 202
- boy companies 268–281
 apprenticeship 277–278
 Blackfriars 273, 275–277
 Caroline revivals 278
 choristers 270–278
 city comedies 274
 contemporary revivals 278–279
 demise 277–278
 entrepreneurs 272–273
 grammar schools 269–270
 “impression” 271
 repertory 273–277
- Bray, Alan 444
- Brayne, John 106, 170, 213–214
- Brayne, Margaret 289
- Bridewell 81–82, 115, 128, 232
- Broken Heart, The* (Ford) 408
- Brome, Alexander 602, 609
- Brome, Richard 56, 93, 278, 465–469, 514, 524, 551, 599, 602–603 *see also* individual works
- brothels 80, 81, 215, 505
- Brown, Anthony, Viscount Montague 316
- Brown, Pamela Allen 290–291
- Bruster, Douglas 99
- Buc, Sir George 227, 228, 229, 232–233
- Buckingham, 1st Duke of *see* Villiers, George, 1st Duke of Buckingham
- Buckingham, 3rd Duke of *see* Stafford, Edward, 3rd Duke of Buckingham
- Bull (playhouse) 213, 218
- Bulwer, John 201, 478
- Burbage, James 121, 213–214, 218–220, 240, 242, 374, 546
- Burbage, Richard 218–220, 242, 245, 253, 277, 346, 520, 546 *see also* Lord Chamberlain's Men
- Burby, Cuthbert 553, 556, 565–567
- Burre, Walter 55
- Burton, Robert 166, 460, 493
- Bussy D'Ambois* (Chapman) 274–275, 277
- by-work 288
- calculus 167
- Calvinism 144–150
- Campion, Thomas 318, 363, 364, 365, 366
- Cane, Andrew 200
- Canterbury, touring companies ban 306
- Captives, The* (Heywood) 547, 549
- Carlell, Lodowick 234

- Caroline era 1–3, 19–20, 234–235, 278, 363–364
- Carr, Robert 18, 362, 363
- cartography 92, 167, 503
- Cary, Elizabeth 462–463, 577, 583–587
- Cary, Sir Henry, Viscount Falkland 584
- Castiglione, Baldassare 21, 25–30, 272, 515, 517
- casting off for print 554
- Catesby, Robert 17
- catharsis 188–189, 410, 426
- Cathay Company 94
- Catholicism
- antitheatricity 187–188
 - break from 145
 - Charles I 18–19
 - during Elizabethan years 146–149
 - Elizabeth I 11–14
 - history plays 380–383
 - James I 16–17
 - Mary I 146
 - Reformation 146
- Caveat or Waring for Common Cursetors*, A (Harman) 115–116
- Cavell, Stanley 22, 32–33
- Cavendish, Margaret 331, 577–578, 587–592
- Cecil, Robert, 1st Earl of Salisbury 18–19, 79
- Cecil, William 11, 161, 298
- censorship
- end of touring companies 305–307
 - imprisonment 233–234
 - licensing 228, 232–233
 - manuscripts 549–551
 - rehearsal 251–252
- Cervantes, Miguel de 427
- Chamberlain, John 197–198
- Chamberlain, Robert 602
- Chamberlain's Men 121, 215, 218–219, 242, 245, 246
- Chambers, E. K. 37, 283–284
- Chancery 80
- Changeling, The* (Middleton) 25–26, 462, 488
- chapel choirs 231, 270–278, 326
- Chapman, George 363
- Characters* (Overbury) 253
- charivari 55
- Charles I 1–3, 19–20, 234–235, 278, 363–364
- Charles, Prince 18–19
- Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, A (Middleton) 460–462
- chastity 131–132
- Chester cycle 40
- children
- domestic life 137–138
 - immigrants 68–69
 - out of marriage 128
 - see also boys; choristers
- Children of Blackfriars 55
- Children of the Chapel 231, 246, 270–278
- Children of the King's Revels 221
- Children of Paul's 212–213, 219, 231, 245, 270–271, 273–274
- Children of the Queen's Revels 222, 226, 276–277
- chin chucking 452
- Chirologia, or the Natural Language of the Hand* (Bulwer) 201
- Cholmley, John 215
- choreography in revenge tragedies 406–409
- choristers
- chapel choirs 231, 270–278, 326
 - companies 270–278
 - entrepreneurs 272–273
 - great households 326, 327
 - playhouses 213
 - repertory 273–275
 - St. Pauls 212–213, 219, 231, 245, 270–271, 273–274
 - Windsor Castle 213
- Christian Hospitality Handled Common-place-wise* 67
- Christian Turned Turk*, A (Daborne) 91, 385, 481
- Christmas, social inversion 313
- Christus triumphans* 185
- Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* 377, 389–390
- church courts 128, 132, 134
- Church of England
- Calvinism 144–150
 - Elizabeth I 11–14, 146–149
 - Henry VIII 145
 - James I 149–150
 - Mary I 146
 - Puritanism 144, 149–150
 - the Reformation 143–153
- churches
- dedications 38–39
 - as performance spaces 37–38
 - sermons 147, 151–152
- church law
- divorce 143
 - marriage 131–132

- Churchyard, Thomas 315, 318
- Cicero 25, 27, 515, 517–518
- circular motions in revenge tragedies 413–415
- citizen comedy 75, 76, 84
- city comedy 92, 274, 383
- civic authority, touring 299–300
- civic drama 337–353
 - Lord Mayor's show 338–341, 346–351
 - royal celebrations 338–341, 342–343
 - secular rituals 341–346
 - spaces 505–509
- civic rituals 341–346
- civility 515
- class conflict 75–77, 80–82
- Clavell, John 604–605
- Clegg, Cyndia Susan 54
- Cleopatra, dramatic representations of 252, 462, 480, 563, 577, 580–582, 585
- Cleopatra* (Daniel) 563
- Clifford, Lady Anne 78–79
- Clifton, Thomas 275
- closet drama 49, 331, 567, 576, 580, 609
- closures of playhouses 235–236
- cloth exports 16, 77, 94
- clowns 42, 56, 205–206
- Cockayne, Alderman Sir William 83
- Cockpit (playhouse) 53, 61, 183, 223, 602
- codes of conduct in court 310–311
- cognition and materiality 537–538
- cognitive ecology 202–203
- coin production 101–102
- comedies
 - clowns 205–206
 - economy 99
 - female impersonation 208
 - gendering 464–467
 - popular culture 57–58
 - spaces 503–509
 - wit 514–516
 - women 286–287*see also* city comedy; citizen comedy; tragicomedy
- commerce
 - London 77–82
 - popular culture 54–58
- commodification 100
- common light 259
- communities, scrutiny 128
- companies
 - naming 239
 - patron relationships 329–334
 - repertory 201, 239–249
 - sizes 201
 - texts 549–552
 - touring 296–308
- Company of Merchant Adventurers 94
- composition of plays 547–549
- Compton, Lord 83
- Concealed Fancies, The* (Brackley and Cavendish) 331, 593
- constables 128
- construction of playhouses 200
- consumer culture 15–16, 98–99, 102–103
- contagion
 - antitheatricity 183–188
 - cure 409–412
- continental influences 21–34
- Convent of Pleasure* (Cavendish) 588–589
- Cooke, William 572
- Copernicus, Nicolaus 155, 157–158
- Coriolanus* (Shakespeare) 119–120
- Corpus Christi festivities 36, 40, 185, 240, 299, 314, 341
- coronations 314, 338–341, 342–343, 456–458
- Coryat(e), Thomas 91, 286, 289–290
- cosmology 157–159
- costs
 - boy companies 268–269
 - playhouse entrance 212
 - printing 556
 - touring 297–298
- Court of Aldermen 79–80
- Court of Burgesses 79
- Court of Common Council 228
- Courtier, The see Book of the Courtier, The* (Castiglione)
- courting 131–132
- Court masques *see* masques
- courts
 - church 128
 - codes of conduct 310–311
 - coronations 314
 - entertainment 287–288, 309–321
 - coronations 314
 - foreign policy 312
 - jousts 313–314
 - occasional 313–315
 - pageants 314–315, 317
 - performance 310–312

- progresses 309, 314–319
 social inversion 313
 space 310–312
 texts 316–318
 Italian 25–26
 jousts 313–314
 military exercises 313
 philosophy 310–311
 progresses 287–288, 309, 314–316
 social bias 80–82
 social inclusion 82
 theater support 82
 witchcraft trials 171–176
 Covent Garden 78
 Coventry touring companies ban 307
 Cowley, Richard 242
 Cox, Captain 55
 Crane, William 515–516
 credit economy 100–102
 Creede, Thomas 565–567
 crime 53, 114, 116–119
 critical approaches 441–542
 disability 487–500
 aesthetic nervousness 494, 495–496
 compensatory model 492
 future directions 496–497
 material model 492
 moral model 490–492, 493
 religious model 492–493
 Shakespeare 487–488, 491, 496–497
 theater 493–496
 theories 489–493
 gender 456–473
 cross-dressing 463–470
 Elizabeth I 456–459
 femininity 467–469
 fluidity 447–448
 Jonson 463–467, 468–469
 masculinity 464–467
 pageants 456–458
 patriarchy 459–460
 pregnancy 459–461
 materiality 529–542
 books 531–532
 cognition 537–538
 global trade and labor 533–535
 phenomenology 538–540
 provenance 530–531
 race 474–486
 Huarte, Juan 477–478
 Marlowe 476, 479–480
 religion 481–483
 Shakespeare 475, 477, 480–483
 social cohesion 478–480
 transmission 477–478
 sexuality and queerness 443–455
 fetish 452
 gender fluidity 447–448
 homoeroticism 444–447, 451–453
 homonormativity 449–450
 unhistoricism 452
 women 448–451
 space and place 501–512
 spaces 501–512
 comedies 505–509
 digital turn 510
 gender 503–505
 histories 502–505
 present 509–510
 urban 505–509
 wit 513–528
 concepts 513–515
 evolution of 518–522
 matter of 522–525
 underpinnings 515–518
 Cromwellian Era performances 330–331
 Croke, Andrew 572
 cross-dressing 207–209, 447–448, 463–470
 Cross Keys (playhouse) 213
Coryat's Crudities see Coryat, Thomas
 Coryat, Thomas 91, 286, 289
 Crystal, David 264–265
 cuckoldry 135–136, 460–461
 Cullen, Mildred 400
 Cullen, Thomas 400
 cultural materialism 529–530 *see also* materiality
 cultural model of disability 492
 culture
 of debt 103–106
 global trade and labor 533–535
 race 478–483
 tragicomedies/romances 427–428
 transmission 286–287
 cunning folk 171
Cunning Lover, The (Alexander Brome) 602
Cupid's Revenge (Beaumont) 277

- Curtain (playhouse) 80–81, 214
 curtains 128
 Cutpurse, Moll *see* Frith, Mary
Cymbeline (Shakespeare) 252, 371, 420, 421
Cynthia's Revels (Jonson) 246, 275–276
Cyprian Conqueror, The (anon.) 608
- Daborne, Robert 91, 106, 385, 481, 546, 557
Daemonologie (James VI and I) 175
 Dalechamp, Caleb 67
damnum emergens 107
 dancing, masques 366–367, 408–409
 Daniel, Samuel 232, 276
 Danter, John 553
David and Bethsabe (Peele) 58
 Davies, Sir John 52, 314, 585
 Dawes, Robert 251–252
 Day, John 91, 246, 276, 391, 398, 600
 death rate 76
 debt 98–111
 culture of 103–106
 defaults 104–105
 drama of 106–109
 imprisonment 104–105
 institutionalization 103–105
 London 80
 macroeconomics 100–102
 microeconomics 102–103
 see also bonds
de casibus 24–25, 31, 46, 392, 564
 “Declaration of Sports” 17
 decline of touring companies 305–307
 Dee, John 155, 161
Defense of Poesy, The (Philip Sidney) 27, 36, 422
 deformities 487–489, 491–492 *see also* disability
 Dekker, Thomas 52, 60, 61, 274, 422
 history plays 381, 383
 immigration 67, 69, 71
 trade and travel 95–96, 533
 vagrancy 118
 see also individual works
- Deloney, Thomas 61
Demoiselle, The (Brome) 465–469
 demonic pacts 174–175
 demonization of vagrants 115–120
 demonology 173, 174–175
De Oratore (Cicero) 25, 27, 515, 517–518
 depth effects 504–507
- Derby, Earl of *see* Stanley, William, sixth Earl of Derby
 Derby's Men 218, 231, 242–243, 245
De revolutionibus (Copernicus) 155, 157
 Descartes, René 32, 33
 “deserving” poor 113, 114–115
 Desmond revolts 14
De rerum natura (Lucretius) 27
 Devereux, Robert, 3rd Earl of Essex 11, 12, 14, 230, 314, 607
Device of the Pageant Borne Before Wolston Dixi (Peele) 347
 devil's mark 174
Diary, Henslowe's 199, 251, 288, 323, 390, 546
 digital turn 510
 directors, absence of 262–263
 disability 487–500
 aesthetic nervousness 494, 495–496
 compensatory model 492
 future directions 496–497
 material model 492
 moral model 490–492, 493
 religious model 492–493
 Shakespeare 487–488, 491, 496–497
 theater 493–496
 theories 489–493
Discoverie of Witchcraft, The (Scot) 52
 disguisings 313 *see also* masque
 dissolution of monasteries 114–115, 377, 382, 389, 393, 535
 division of labour 99–100
 divorce 133–134
Doctor Faustus see Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, The (Marlowe)
- domestic life 125–142
 adultery 134, 135–136
 Cary 583–587
 children 137–138
 divorce 133–134
 expectations 135–136
 family 125–127
 historiography 138–140
 marriage 130–138
 parenting 137–138
 privacy 128–129
 scrutiny 128
 separation 133–134
 sex 128, 131–132
 sources 138–140
 “domestic theater” 287–288 *see also* great households

- domestic tragedies 388–402
- Arden of Faversham* 53, 377, 388–390, 392–395, 399
 - definitions 390–392
 - Heywood 397–399
 - laughter 399–400
 - performance 399–400
 - reality 399–400
 - repertory 390–399
- Donne, John 113, 152, 155, 162, 166, 515–516
- Downton, Thomas 106, 201
- Drake, Sir Francis 12, 13, 90
- drama, civic 337–353, 505–509
- dramaturgy of the mistakable 406
- Drayton, Michael 221, 390, 546
- Dryden, John 425, 514
- Duchess of Malfi, The* (Webster)
- astrology 158
 - contagion and cure 410–412
 - continental influences 22, 26, 31
 - gender 461, 462
 - marriage 131
- Dudley, Ambrose, third Earl of Warwick 227, 240
- Dudley, Robert, 1st Earl of Leicester 11, 55, 240, 305, 310, 315, 317–318, 329 *see also* Leicester's Men
- dueling 81
- Dutch Church Libel 65–68, 72
- Dutch Courtesan, The* (Marston) 66, 69
- Dymock, Sir Edward 68
- Earl of Oxford's Men 60–61, 271, 299
- Earl of Sussex's Men 240
- Earl of Warwick *see* Dudley, Ambrose, third Earl of Warwick
- Earl of Warwick's Men *see* Warwick's Men
- early modern text usage 262–264
- Easter tropes 39
- East India Company 77, 82, 88, 94, 349, 599
- Eastward Ho!* (Jonson, Chapman, and Marston) 226, 274
- economy
- boy companies 268–269
 - culture of debt 103–106
 - drama of debt 106–109
 - international trade 93–95
 - macroeconomics 100–102
 - microeconomics 102–103
 - vagrancy 114
- education
- Elizabethan society 51–52
 - wit 518–521
- Edward II* (Marlowe) 243, 371, 444–446, 452
- Edward IV* (Heywood) 245, 345, 391, 396
- Edward VI, king of England 58, 65, 145, 324, 332–333
- grammar school 279
- Edwardes, Richard 272
- Edwardian Reformation 145
- Edward's Boys 279, 464
- Elckerlijc* 43
- Eld, George 561–562, 570–571
- Elector Palatine's Men 246 *see also* Admiral's Men; Prince Henry's Men
- Elizabeth I, Queen of England 11–16
- alchemy 161
 - censorship 229
 - death 16
 - end of reign 231
 - gendering 456–459
 - Ireland 14–15
 - licensing 226–231
 - Reformation 146–149
 - St. Stephens pageant 457–458
 - Spanish Wars 225–226
 - succession 11, 12, 148, 317, 374
 - Vagrancy 112–113
- Elizabethan society
- education 51–52
 - medieval roots 36
 - women 52
- Elizabethan Stage, The* (Chambers) 283
- Elyot, Sir Thomas 92
- enclosure movement 114
- Englishmen for My Money* (Houghton) 69, 70, 505
- English masques 309–310 *see also* masques
- Englishness 69
- English Traveller, The* (Heywood) 93, 398–399
- Entertainment at Britain's Bourse* (Jonson) 93
- entrance fees for playhouses 212
- entrepreneurs 93–96, 272–273
- Epicoene* (Jonson) 448, 464–465, 503, 523–524, 526, 590–591, 602
- epistemology 32–33, 372, 376, 406
- Erasmus, Desiderius 29, 33, 515
- erotic jealousy 32
- Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (Dryden) 425
- Essex, Earl of *see* Devereux, Robert, 3rd Earl of Essex
- euphuia* 515
- Euripides 457, 593
- European actresses 285–286, 289–291

- Evans, Henry 219, 246, 271, 275
Everyman 43
Every Man in His Humour (Jonson) 523
Every Man out of His Humour (Jonson) 83, 245, 551
 Evil May Day riot 67, 75–76
 “evil” spirits 171, 198
 evolutionary hypothesis of Reformation 36–37
 evolution of
 history plays 373–377
 masque 356–358
 wit 518–522
Examination of Men’s Wits, The (Huarde) 477–478
 excommunication 128
 execution of Charles I 1–3
- Faerie Queene, The* (Spenser) 31–32, 59, 314, 418
Fair Maid of the Exchange (Heywood) 488
 “fair maids” in popular culture 57–58
Fair Maid of the West, Part I, The (Heywood) 53–54, 458–459
 faith by statute 144–147
Faithful Shepherdess, The (Fletcher) 62, 419, 426
faits divers 53
 Falkland, Viscount *see* Cary, Sir Henry, Viscount Falkland
 familiars 174–175
 family
 marriage 130–133
 significance of 125–127
 witchcraft 173–174
 see also domestic life
Family of Arthur, Lord Capel, The (Johnson) 126
 Farrant, Richard 213, 271, 275
 Fawkes, Guy 17
 female authorship 576–597
 Cary, Elizabeth 462–463, 577, 583–587
 Cavendish, Margaret 331, 577–578, 587–592
 Sidney, Mary 577, 579–583
 female impersonation 207–209, 447–448, 463–470
 female minstrels 330
 femininity 467–469
 feminism
 gendered erasure 530
 spaces 503–505
 see also gender
femmes soles 41
 fencing 81
 fetish 452, 533–534
 Feuillerat, Albert 323–324, 333
- Field, Nathan 106, 275, 277, 427
 field of wit 522–525
 finance, national 19, 101
 Findlen, Polly 399
Five Books of Architecture (Serlio) 505–506
 Fleet Street, class conflict 81
 Fletcher, John 61–62, 419, 427, 488 *see also* *individual works*
 folio printing 553–554, 556–557
 Folio Syndicate, the 570–572
 folklore in progresses 315
 food *see* materiality
 fool’s plays 46
 forbearance 105
 Ford, John 53, 166 *see also* *individual works*
 foreign policy in masques 312
 forfeiture 108–109
 formal patents 203
 Forman, Simon 197
 forme, printing 554–556
 fortune (luck) 24–25, 30, 31, 43–44, 96, 421, 463
 Fortune (playhouses) 197, 198, 203–204, 220, 223, 240, 244, 290
 Foucault, Michel 6, 444, 449
Four Prentices of London, The (Heywood) 61, 76, 92, 424
 Foxe, John 146, 185, 380
 foul papers 547–550, 554–555
 frames, printing 554–555
 France, Catholic League 14
 freedom of the city 68
 French actresses 286
Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay (Greene) 53, 241, 243, 302, 374, 604
 Frith, Mary 57, 289–290, 383, 458, 461–462, 469, 507, 509
frons scenae 252, 260–261
Fulgens and Lucrez (Medwall) 45–46, 325–326
 Fuller, Nicholas 68
 furnishings 128–129, 508, 535
 furniture 258, 311, 508
- Gainsford, Thomas 83, 84, 94
Galatea (Lyly) 54, 448, 451, 464
 Galen 163–165
 Galileo 155, 157, 168
Game at Chess, A (Middleton) 226, 229, 232, 233, 549, 552
 “gaming” 460

- Garnier, Robert 577, 579–583, 584, 585 *see also*
Marc Antoine
- gatherers 289
- gender
A Chaste Maid in Cheapside 460–462
 critical approaches 456–473
 cross-dressing 463–470
 domestic tragedies 397–399
The Duchess of Malfi 461, 462
 Elizabeth I 456–459
 female impersonation 207–209, 447–448
 femininity 467–469
 fluidity 447–448
 Jonson 463–467, 468–469
 masculinity 464–467
 pageants 456–458
 patriarchy 138, 459–460
 spaces 503–505
The Tragedy of Mariam 462–463
 wit 524–525
 witchcraft 173
see also men; sexuality; women
- gendered erasure 530
- generic type-names 43–45
- genres
 “kinship networks” 418
see also individual genres
- Gentillet, Innocent 24
- gentlemen
 becoming 83–84
 clashes with apprentices 80–81
 preferences 76
 violence 81–82
- ghosts 404–406
- Gifford, George 175–176
- Gifford, Gilbert 13
- Giles, Nathaniel 219, 275
- Globe (playhouses) 60–61, 218–219, 222, 255–256,
 260–261
- Glory of England ... Whereby She Triumpheth Over All the
 Nations of the World, The* (Gainsford) 94
- Gloucester touring companies ban 306
- Goldberg, Jonathan 444–446
- Golden Chainé, A* (Perkins) 151
- Golden Hind* 12
- Gorboduc* (Sackville and Norton) 36, 48, 229,
 317–318
- Gospels 39
- Gosson, Stephen 183–184, 185, 187, 188–189
 grammar schools 269–270
- Graves, Thornton Shirley 282–285
- Great Fire of London 224
- great households 322–336
 books of ordinances 323–327
 domestic life 324–325
 masques 323, 326, 328–329, 357–370
 musicians 326–327, 366–367
 patronage 329–334
 personnel 324–325, 329, 331
 playwrights 331
 REED project 322–324
 regulations 324
 religious ceremonies 325
 retainers 324–327, 329–334
 royal progresses 326, 363–365
 stages 325–326
 touring 305, 329
 women 329–331
- Greene, Robert 53, 58, 117, 221, 244 *see also individual
 works*
- Gresham, Sir Thomas 95
- Grey, Lady Jane 457
- Grounde of Artes, The* (Recorde) 167
- group violence, “rough music” 55
- Guarini, Giambattista 31, 426
- guilds 41, 68, 69, 77
- Gull's Hornbook, The* (Dekker) 60
- Gunnell, Richard 223–224
- gunpowder plot 17
- Guy of Warwick* (anon.) 423–424
- gypsies 118
- Gypsies Metamorphosed, The* (Jonson) 118
- Hakluyt, Richard 88, 90–91, 94–95
Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas bis Pilgrims (Purchas) 91
- Hall, Bishop Joseph 93
- Halls and touring shows 302–303
- Hamlet* (Shakespeare) 22, 33, 406
- handfasting 131–132
- Hankins, James 25
- Hans Beer-Pot ... or See Me and See Me Not*
 (Daubridgécourt) 92
- Harbage, Alfred 196
- Hariot, Thomas 91
- Harman, Thomas 115–119
- Harrison, Stephen 317

- Harvey–Nashe quarrel 522
- Harvey, William 166
- Haughton, Henry 213
- Haughton, William 69
- Head, Richard 117–118
- Helgerson, Richard 379–380
- Henrietta Maria, Queen Consort 186, 287, 330, 361, 363–364
- Henry IV, King of France 14
- Henry IV Part 1*, continental influences 29
- Henry V*, religion 381–382
- Henry VIII, King of England 145
- Henry, Prince of Wales 204–205, 312
- Henslowe, Philip 61–62, 99, 215–216, 198, 228, 242–244, 251–252, 323, 535, 551, 556
- Agnes Henslowe (wife) 288
- debt 106–107
- Diary* 199, 251, 288, 323, 390, 546
- Rose (playhouse) 99, 106–107, 197–199, 215–216, 220, 240, 242
- Fortune (playhouse) 197, 198, 203–204, 220, 223, 240, 244, 290
- Hope (playhouse) 222
- see also* Lord Admiral's Men
- heraldic minstrels 326–327
- Herbert, George 162
- Herbert, Sir Henry 225–226, 233, 234, 235
- Herbert, William, 3rd Earl of Pembroke 235
- Hertford, Earl of *see* Seymour, Edward, 1st Earl of Hertford
- heterohistory* 452
- Heywood, Jasper 46–47
- Heywood, Thomas 53–54, 61, 93
- antitheatricity 188
- domestic tragedies 396–400
- gender 458–459
- satire by children 276
- trade 95
- see also individual works*
- Hickes, Richard 215
- hierarchy and vagrancy 115–120
- historically informed performance 256–265
- amounts of rehearsal 257–259
- common light 259
- costumes 264
- director-free processes 262–263
- early modern text versions 262–264
- “original pronunciation” 264–265
- parts, memorization and prompting 259–261
- reconstructed and extant spaces 261–262
- single-gendered casts 264
- subtext 259–260
- history
- books 531–532
- gendered erasure 530
- of spaces 502–505
- history plays 371–387
- beginnings 373–377
- definitions 371–373
- development of history plays 373–377
- propaganda 375–377
- Queen's Men 374–377
- religion 380–383
- Shakespeare 377, 378–380
- source materials 374
- Tudor dynasty 375–377
- Histrion-Mastix* (Prynne) 59, 186, 469–470
- Hitchcock, Richard 12
- Hohenheim, P. A. T. B. von *see* Paracelsus
- Holbein, Hans, the Younger 126
- Holinshed, Raphael 377, 389–390
- Holland, Aaron 221
- Hollar, Wenceslaus 222
- Holyday, Barten 168
- Holy Land, pilgrimages 92
- homiletic tragedy 392
- Homily against Idleness, An* 112–113, 115
- homeroeticism 444–447, 451–453
- homohistory 452
- homonormativity 449–450
- homosexuality 446 *see also* queerness
- homosociality 449–450
- bonestas* 186
- Hope (playhouse) 222
- Hotspur 29
- Houghton, William 69, 70, 505
- “Household of Magnificence” 311
- households
- Arden of Faversham* 392–395
- aristocratic 324–334
- musicians 326–327
- personnel 324–327, 329, 331
- privacy and space 128–129
- regulations 324
- retainers 324–327, 329–334
- roles 129, 138
- scrutiny 128

- women 329–331
see also domestic life
- houses of correction 115
- Howard, Jean E. 379
- Howes, Edmund 198
- Howson, William 213
- Huarte, Juan 477–478
- Huguenots 14
- Humanism 21–34, 45–48
 Bancroft 23
 Luther 22
 Machiavelli 22–25
 wit 517–518
- humors 163–166
- Hunnis, William 271
- Hutchinson, Elizabeth 288
- iatrochemistry 155, 164–165
- ideology, representations of vagrancy 118–119
- idleness 115 *see also* vagrancy
- If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (Heywood) 95, 383
- Il Pastor Fido* (Guarini) 31
- Images of Englishmen and Foreigners* (Hoenselaars) 70
- “imaginative” religious dramas 40
- immigration
 children 68–69
 Dutch Church Libel 65–68
 guilds 68, 69
 London 76–77
 multiculturalism 65–74
 rights to trade 68
 self–other dynamics 70–71
- imports
 London 78–79
 luxury items 94
- “impression”, power of 271
- imprisonment
 debt 104–105
 licensing 233–234
- improvisation 205–206, 285
- inaugural celebrations 338–341, 342–343
- income from touring 297–300
- indoor playhouses 211–212 *see also* private playhouses
- infidelity 135–136
- inflation 100–102, 114
- inflation of honours 18
- ingenium* 515–522
- Innes, A. Mitchell 101
- insolvency 104–105
- Institutio oratoria* (Quintilian) 27
- insurrection 121–122
- interest 107–109
- interludes 45, 325, 326
- interpretation of masques 316
- intimacy 255–256
- IOU’s 101–102
- Island Princess, The* (Fletcher) 427
- Isle of Dogs, The* (Nashe and Jonson) 216, 231
- Isle of Gulls, The* (Day) 276
- Italian actresses 285–286, 289–291
- Italian court opera, concepts 309
- itineraries, touring 304–305
- Jack Drum’s Entertainment* (Marston) 273, 274
- James VI and I, King of England and Scotland 11–20, 82, 149–150, 232–233
- Jameson, Frederic 427
- Jew of Malta, The* (Marlowe) 23, 95, 201, 243, 244, 476
- Jews 23, 66, 89, 118, 184, 426, 481
- Johnson, Cornelius 126
- Jones, Inigo 309, 316, 326, 359, 361–362, 366, 507
- Jones, John 605
- Jones, Richard 106, 201, 245, 566
- Jones, William 566, 567
- Jonson, Ben
 alchemy 160–161
 antitheatricality 182–183, 190
 boy companies 274
 censorship 226
 dancing 366–367
 gender 463–467, 468–469
 global trade and labor 534–535
 masques 313, 364–367, 468–469
The New Inn 465–467
 printing 555, 556
 travel 93
 vagrancy 118
 wit 523, 524
see also individual works
- Josephus 585
- jousts 313–314
- Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare) 247, 372, 384, 523
- Kempe, William 56–57, 219, 239, 242, 245, 246, 520–521
- Kendall, Thomas 276

- Kenilworth, progresses 310, 315, 317, 364
 Kermode, Lloyd Edward 70
 Keysar, Robert 221–222, 276–277
 Kindleberger, Charles 101
King James IV (Greene) 371
King Joban (Bale) 47
King Lear (Shakespeare) 22, 120, 158, 166
 kings as beggars 119–120
 King's Men 222–223, 233, 246–247, 604
 King's Revels 224, 301
King and the Subject, The (Massinger) 234
 “kinship networks” 418
 Kirkham, Edward 273–274
 kissing 208
 kitchens 303
Knack to Know a Knave, A 239, 243
Knight of the Burning Pestle, The (Beaumont) 55, 301, 330, 464
Knight of Malta, The (attr. Fletcher, Field, and Massinger) 478
 Koivisto–Alanko, Paivi 513, 514
 Kyd, Thomas 51–52, 405–406
- labor 533–535
 Lady Elizabeth's Men 216, 222, 247, 278
Lady of May (Mary Sidney) 364
 landed gentry 83–84
 landscape 503
 Laneham, Robert 55
 Langley, Francis 216
 language 199–200
 oral culture 199–200
 “original pronunciation” 264–265
 wit 513–514
 Lanyer, Aemelia 330
Larum for London, A (anon.) 488, 492, 495
Late Murder of the Son upon the Mother (Dekker, Ford, Rowley, and Webster) 391
 Latin plays 269–270
 Laud, William 148, 234
 laughter
 popular culture 57–58
 tragedies 399–400
Laws (Plato) 515
lazzi 287
 Lefebvre, Henri 502
 Leibniz, Gottfried 167
 Leicester's Men 206, 213, 227, 239, 240, 241, 297, 329
 length of performances 254–255
 Levant Company 89, 94
 Levine, Laura 447, 463
 Liberties, the 69, 99
Liber Vagatorum 117–118
 licensing 225–238
 Caroline era 234–235
 censoring 228, 229–230, 232–233
 closures 235–236
 competing authorities 227–228
 at end of Elizabeth I 231
 fees 228
 James I 232–233
 origins 226–227
 playhouse building 213, 228
 for the press 232–233
 protection afforded 229–230
 Puritanism 234–236
 text transmission 549–551
 touring 298–299
 women 288–289
Life, The (Cary) 584
 Linton, Simi 489–490
 listening versus watching 60
 literacy, print culture 53–54
Little French Lawyer, The (Beaumont and Fletcher) 488
 liturgical seeds 38–45
 location-specific writing 199
 logarithms 167
 London 75–87
 aldermen 79–80
 antitheatricality 182–192
 apprentices 80–81
 civic rituals 342–345
 class conflict 75–82, 85
 commerce 77–82
 coronations 338, 342–343
 debt 80
 Great Fire 224
 immigration 65–66, 68, 76–77
 international trade 93–95
 Lord Mayor's show 338–341, 346–351
 luxury imports 78–79
 manufacturing and trade 77–78
 plague 223
 population growth 76–77
 prostitution 81
 Royal entry 339–340

- shopping 78–79
social mobility 82–85
spaces 505–510
tensions with Westminster 79–82
urban morality plays 345–346
vagrancy 114, 121–122
women 77
- London Corporation 183
London Royal Exchange 71
London Watch pageants 344–345
long-distance trips 90
Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art, The
(Wager) 43–44
Longus 422
Looke About You (anon.) 488
Looking Glasse for London and England (Lodge and
Greene) 58
Lord Admiral's Men *see* Admiral's Men
Lord Berkley's Men 302
Lord Chamberlain's Men *see* Chamberlain's Men
Lord Dudley's Players 302
Lord Hay's Masque (Campion) 363, 365, 366
Lord Mayor, theaters 121–122
Lord Mayor's show 338–341, 346–351
Lord Strange *see* Stanley, James, 7th Earl of Derby
Lord Strange's Men *see* Strange's Men
Loseley Manuscripts 323–324
love 133, 139–140
Love Restored 365
Loves Adventures 589, 590–591
Love's Labour's Lost 449, 453, 513, 516, 518, 519
Lucan 591
Lucretius 27
Lust's Dominion (Dekker) 475, 476
Lutheranism 22, 382
luxury imports and textiles 16, 78–79, 94, 288
Lyly, John 54, 239, 242, 246, 271–272, 275
court masques 318
sexuality and queerness 448
wit 514–515
see also individual works
Lyric Wonder (Biester) 516–517
- Macbeth* 177–178, 190, 381, 385, 463
Machiavelli, Niccolò 22–25, 323
McManus, Clare 289
Macro collection, the 43
macrocosm 38, 163–165
macroeconomics 100–102
Mactacio Abel 41–42
magic 170–181
in context 170–176
demonology 173, 174
Doctor Faustus 198
onstage 176–178
see also alchemy; witchcraft
Magnetic Lady, The (Jonson) 234
Magnificent Entertainment, The 52
Magnyfycence (Skelton) 46
Maid's Tragedy, The (Beaumont and Fletcher) 606
Makejoy, Matilda 330
Malcontent, The (Marston) 30–31, 279
maleficium 171–176
male friendship 446
Mankind 42–43
Man of Mode, The (Etheridge) 518
manufacturing 77–78
manuscripts
acting companies 549–552
creation 547–549
“foul” papers 547–549
licensing 549–551
printing 552–557
publishers 560–575
revisions 550–551
maps 92
Marathon Man (Schlesinger) 254
Marc Antoine (Garnier) 579
Marching Watch 341, 344
Maria, Henrietta *see* Henrietta Maria, Queen Consort
maritime exploration and trade 77–78, 90
market development 98–100, 523–524
market individualism 102–103
Mark, Gospel of 39
Marlowe, Christopher 23, 92, 177, 198, 205, 208–209,
383, 444–446, 476, 479–480, 536–537 *see also*
individual works
marriage 127, 130–138
adultery 134, 135–136
age 130–131
aristocracy 132
children 137–138
choice 132–133
clandestine 131
divorce and separation 133–134
Elizabeth I 148

- marriage (*cont'd*)
 Elizabeth Cary 584
 love 133, 139–140
 Mary Cavendish 587
 relations 134–135
 remarriage 133–134
 social convention 127, 130–132, 460
 “Spanish Match” 18–19, 150
- Marsh, Thomas 564–565
- Marston, John 30–31, 226, 245
 boy companies 273, 274, 276
 immigration 66, 69
see also individual works
- Martinelli, Angelica 287
- Martinelli, Drusiano 287
- Martin Marprelate controversy 272
- Mary I 65, 146
- Mary, Queen of Scots 12–13
- masculinity 464–467
- Masque of Blackness* (Jonson) 313, 323, 330, 364, 478–480
- Masque of Flowers* 363
- Masque of Queens* (Jonson) 313, 468–469
- masques 310–312, 323, 326, 328–329, 357–370
 antimasques 313
 concepts 309–310
 conventions 358–361
 critical history 361–363
 dancing 366–367, 408–409
 definitions 357
 evolution 357–358
 foreign policy 312
 gender 469
 interpretations 316
 musicians 366–367
 pamphlets 317–318
 performance 310–312, 365–367
 perspectives portrayed 363–365
 revenge tragedies 408–409, 413–414
 royal celebrations 312–316
 Stuart 310
 texts 316–318
 women 287–288
- Massacre at Paris* (Marlowe) 383
- Massinger, Philip 76, 84–85, 234–235, 427, 428, 555
see also individual works
- mass sociability, popular culture 58–59
- masterless men 114
- master players 202, 203–205
- Master of the Revels 204, 225–238
 boy companies 268–269
 censorship as protection 229–230
 fees 228
 license 227
 origins 226–227
 rehearsal 251–252
 text transmission 549–551
see also licensing
- Matar, Nabil 93
- material artifacts, provenance 530–531
- materiality
 books 531–532
 cognition 537–538
 concepts 529–530
 critical approaches 529–542
 food 100, 104, 114, 116, 119, 173, 215, 288, 296,
 324, 530
 global trade and labor 533–535
 phenomenology 538–540
 religious objects 535–537
 trifles 535–537
 wit 525–527
- material model of disability 492
- mathematics 167–168
- matter of wit 522–525
- Matthew, Gospel of 39
- Mazer, Cary 253–254
- Meade, Jacob 106
- medical model of disability 490
- Medici, Marie de 317
- medicine 162–166
- medieval roots of drama 35–50
 liturgical seeds 38–45
 morality plays 42–45
 mystery plays 36–38, 40–42
 pageants 40–42
 secularization 36–38
 secular plays 45–48
- Medieval Stage, The* (Chambers) 37
- Meditations* (Aurelius) 33
- Medwall, Henry 45–46, 325–326
- Meighen, Richard 572
- Memorable Masque* (Chapman) 363
- memorization 259–261
- men
 company repertories 240
 female impersonation 207–208, 447–448

- homosociality 449–450
 impersonation 469–470
 queerness 443–455
 repertory 61–62, 300–301, 374–377
 sodomy 444–446
 witchcraft 173
 Menon, Madhavi 452–453
 merchants
 international trade 93–96
 London 77–85
 social mobility 82–85
 as vogue 89
Merchant of Venice, The (Shakespeare) 22–24, 108–109, 446
 method acting 254
Michaelmas Term 76, 84
 microcosm 38, 164
 microeconomics 102–103
 Middleton, Thomas 25–26, 71, 76, 84, 274 *see also*
 individual works
Midsummer Night's Dream, A (Shakespeare) 252, 325,
 331–332, 451, 569, 604
 Midsummer Watch 344
 military exercises 313
 Millington, Thomas 566, 567
 minstrels 297, 326–327, 330
Mirror of Monsters (Rankins) 186, 187–188, 189–190
 misogyny 135, 138
 moderation 149
 monarchy
 coronations 314, 338–341, 342–343, 456–458
 gender 456–459
 pageants 314–315, 317, 456–458
 processional routes in London 339–340
 progresses 287–288, 309, 314–318, 326, 363–365
 see also individual monarchs
 monasteries, dissolution 114–115
 money
 credit economy 100–102
 culture of debt 103–106
 debt 98–111
 drama of debt 106–109
 early modern drama 98–100
 international trade 95
 macroeconomics 100–102
 market development 98–100
 microeconomics 102–103
 property laws 107
 speculation 100
 wage deflation 100–101
 wit 520–522
 women financiers 288
 Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de 32, 33, 483, 491–492, 568
 Moors 92–93, 95, 474–486 *see also* race
 morality
 antitheatricality 184–189
 domestic tragedies 397–399
 plays 42–45
 scrutiny 128
 moral model of disability 490–492, 493
 More, Sir Thomas 114, 125
 Morison, Richard 113, 115
 morris dancing 59, 282, 327
 mortgages 80
Mother Bombie (Lyly) 488
 Mountfort, Walter 599, 601, 603–604, 608
 Mountjoy, Marie 288
 movement
 courts 310–312
 hands 201
 performance 200–201
 revenge tragedies 412–415
Much Ado About Nothing (Shakespeare) 28–29, 453, 525
 Mulcaster, Richard 270
 Muldrew, Craig 102–103
 multiculturalism 65–74 *see also* immigration
 mummings' plays 58–59
 Munday, Anthony 59, 186, 347, 532, 547
 murders, print culture 53
 Muscovy Company 94
 musicians 326–327, 366–367 *see also* choristers; minstrels
 mystery plays 36–38, 40–42

 Napier, John 167
 Napier, Richard 133
 Nashe, Thomas 21–22, 26, 286 *see also individual works*
 natural philosophy 154–169
 alchemy 159–162
 anatomy 165–166
 astrology 158–159
 astronomy 157–158
 chemistry 160
 mathematics 167–168
 medicine 162–166
Nature (Medwall) 45
 neoplatonism 25–34
New Atlantis, The (Bacon) 167

- New Custom* 66
- New Exchange 79, 93
- Newington Butts 214–215
- New Inn, The* (Jonson) 465–467
- Newman, William R. 160
- News from Bartholomew Fair* (West) 89
- Newton, Sir Isaac 167
- Newton, Thomas 410
- New Way to Pay Old Debts, A* (Massinger) 76, 84–85
- Nine Years' War 14
- Noble Spanish Soldier, The* (Dekker) 71–72
- nonprofessional playwrights 598–611
- publishing 562–564
 - republishing 562–564
 - rule breaking 601–602
 - stage directions 600–601
 - see also individual playwrights*
- Northbrooke, John 182, 184, 187
- Northumberland, Earl of *see* Percy, Henry Algernon, 5th Earl of Northumberland
- Northward Ho* (Dekker and Webster) 274
- Norwich
- pageants 315, 317
 - Red Lion Inn 298
- Norwood, Richard 598, 599, 609
- Novelas ejemplares* (Cervantes) 427
- No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (Middleton) 71, 521
- N-town cycle, the 40
- numbers of players 201
- octavo prints 554, 556
- Okes, Nicholas 570–571
- Old Fortunatus* (Dekker) 67, 95–96, 422
- Old Joiner of Aldgate, The* (Chapman) 273
- Old Law, The* (Massinger, Middleton, and Rowley) 488
- Old Wives Tale* (Peele) 57
- O'Neill, Hugh, Earl of Tyrone 14
- oral culture 54, 199–200
- original practices movement 256–265
- amounts of rehearsal 257–259
 - common light 259
 - costumes 264
 - director-free processes 262–263
 - early modern text versions 262–264
 - original pronunciation 264–265
 - parts, memorization and prompting 259–261
 - reconstructed and extant spaces 261–262
 - single-gendered casts 264
- Orlando Furioso* (Ariosto) 28, 32, 243, 553
- Osmond the Great Turk* (Carrell) 234
- Ottoman Empire 90, 374, 375 *see also* Turks
- outdoor playhouses 211 *see also* public playhouses
- Overbury, Sir Thomas 253, 362, 363
- Ovid 49, 187
- Owlett, Sir Oliver 297, 298
- Oxford University 147, 168, 235, 561
- Oxford, Earl of *see* Vere, Edward de, 17th Earl of Oxford
- pagan traditions 58–59
- pageants 40–42, 314–315, 317
- gendering 456–458
 - London Watch 344–345
 - Lord Mayor's show 346–351
 - St. Stephens 457–458
- page numbering 555–556
- Palsgrave's Men 246–247 *see also* Admiral's Men; Prince Henry's Men
- pamphlets
- antitheatricity 183, 185–189
 - court masques 317–318
 - print culture 53
 - satire ban of 1599 522
 - trade 89
- Paracelsus 155, 164–165
- parenting 137–138
- Paris, siege of 14
- Parliament 12, 15–19, 66, 79, 104, 113, 170, 228, 231, 235
- Parnassus plays 519–521
- participation, audiences 198–199
- parts 259–261
- passionating 253–254
- patents 203, 227
- patriarchy 138, 459–460
- patronage
- great households 329–334
 - text acquisition 546
 - touring 298–300
- Paul's Boys *see* Children of Paul's
- Paul's choristers 212–213, 219, 231, 245, 270–271, 273–274
- Paul's School *see* Children of Paul's
- Pavier, Thomas 569–570
- Pavy, Salomon 275
- pawnbroking 288
- payment, touring 297–300
- Peacham, Henry 105

- Pearce, Edward 273–274
- Peddlers Prophecie, The* 69–70
- Peele, George 57, 346, 347, 405, 474–475, 601 *see also*
individual works
- Peers, Edward 219
- Pembroke, countess of *see* Sidney, Mary
- Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain *see* Herbert, William, 3rd Earl
of Pembroke
- Pembroke's Men 242, 243–244, 297
- penal bonds 80, 104–105
- Percy, Henry Algernon, 5th Earl of Northumberland 323,
325, 327
- Percy, William 601
- performance 195–210
 acting practice 250, 253–267
 amateur dramatics 607–608
 amounts of rehearsal 257–259
 audience participation 198–199
 bonds 106
 celebrated actors 203–205
 clowning 205–206
 common light 259
 concepts 195–196
 costumes 264
 Cromwellian era 330–331
 director-free processes 262–263
 domestic tragedy 399–400
 dual consciousness of actor and character 279
 early modern text versions 262–264
 envisioning 195–199
 female impersonation 207–209, 447–448
 great households 322–336
 kissing 208
 Lord Mayor's Show 346–351
 masque 310–312, 365–367
 movement 200–201
 nonprofessional direction 600–601
 original practices 256–265
 original pronunciation 264–265
 parts, memorization and prompting 202, 259–261
 phenomenology 538–540
 props 198, 252, 535–537
 quality 201–202
 reconstructed and extant spaces 261–262
 recreation 255–265
 rehearsal 202, 250–253
 scheduling 197
 single-gendered casts 264
 spaces 200
 styles 200–202, 253–254
 timings 254–255
 touring venues 302–304
 training 202–203
 voice 199–200
 women 285–288, 468–469
- Pericles* (Shakespeare) 246, 301, 328, 420–421, 461, 569
- Perkin Warbeck* (Ford) 385
- Perkins, William 151
- personal satire 276–277
- personification 43–45
- personnel of households 324–327, 329, 331
- perspectives, masque 363–365
- persuasions, religious 143–153
- Petrarch 25, 28, 384
- phenomenology and performance 538–540
- Philip II, King of Spain 12–13
- Phillips, Mary 289
- philosophers' stone, the 160
- philosophy
 wit 514, 516
 see also natural philosophy
- Phoenix, The* (Middleton) 274
- Phoenix (playhouse) 223, 278 *see also* the Cockpit
- physicians 162–166
- Pierce Penilesse* (Nashe) 26
- Pilgrim, The* (Fletcher) 488
- pilgrimages 92
- Pilgrimage to Parnassus, The* (anon.) 519
- pirates 91
- “plagiary” 523
- plagues 183, 223, 242
- Plato 25, 27, 28, 29, 187, 515
- Platonic idealism 25
- Platter, Thomas 90, 93
- Players' bonds 106
- Playes Confuted in fine Actions* (Gosson) 185
- playhouses 211–224
 1275–78 212–215
 1567 212
 1587 215–216
 1594 216
 1598–1600 216–220
 1607 220–222
 1614 222
 1617 223
 1623 223

- playhouses (*cont'd*)
- 1630 223–224
 - capacity 197
 - closure 235–236
 - debt 106–109
 - definitions 195
 - design 200, 203, 211–212
 - entrance fees 212
 - galleries 212
 - indoor 211
 - “infections” 121–122
 - licensing 213, 228
 - mass sociability 58–59
 - outdoor 211–212
 - plague closures 223
 - public playhouses
 - basic description 211–212
 - popular culture 58–61
 - prejudice 48–49
 - riots 60–61
 - private 211
 - boy companies 268–281
 - support in London 82
 - touring shows 302
 - women-owned/leased 288
 - writing for 199
 - see also individual venues*
- playing companies *see* companies
- Play of the Sacrament* 426
- playwrights
- great households 331
 - nonprofessional 562–564, 598–611
 - women in print 576–597
 - see also individual authors*
- Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (Jonson) 366–367
- Plutarch 49, 582, 591
- Poel, William 255–256, 399
- poena conventionalis* 107
- Poetaster* (Jonson) 246, 276, 521
- poetics of space 310, 315
- politics
- Arden of Faversham* 392–395
 - copyright 228, 229–230
 - English 11–20
 - great households 329–330, 333–334
 - Mary Sidney 579
 - masque 363–365
 - tragicomedies/romances 427–428
- polygonal shape of playhouses 200
 - poor relief 114–115
 - “popery” 147–148, 190, 537
 - popular culture 51–64
 - actors 203–205
 - audience appeal 60–61
 - class mingling 55
 - commercial habits 54–58
 - hits and flops 61–63
 - print culture 53–54
 - public theaters 58–59
 - Puritanism 58–59
 - population growth 76–77, 100–101, 114
 - postlicensing authorial corrections 550–551
 - poverty 100–101, 112–124
 - power
 - aristocratic 329–330, 333–334, 363–365
 - court codes 310–311
 - illusion of 310
 - masque 363–365
 - progresses 314–315
 - touring companies 299–300
 - see also* social capital
 - Praise of Folly, The* (Erasmus) 29, 33
 - predestination 146–147
 - pregnancy 128, 137–138, 459–461
 - prejudice 48–49
 - pre-Marlovian plays 43–44
 - Presbyterians 16–17
 - price revolution 100
 - Prince, The* (Machiavelli) 25
 - Prince Charles’s Men 218, 222, 224, 247
 - Prince Henry’s Barriers* (Jonson) 312, 313
 - Prince Henry’s Men 203, 246–247, 305 *see also* The Lord
 - Admiral’s Men
 - Prince Henry’s and Palsgrave’s Men 220 *see also*
 - Admiral’s Men
 - Principal Navigations* (Hakluyt) 88, 90–91
 - printing 552–557
 - casting off 554
 - costs 556
 - court plays 54
 - female authors 576–597
 - frames 554–555
 - literacy 53–54
 - profits 562–564
 - publishing 552–557, 560–575
 - sale prices 556

- signatures 555–556
 sizes 553–554
 watermarks 554
- privacy 128–129
- Privy Council 113, 121, 227–228, 231, 311
- Proby, Peter 82
- processional routes in London 339–340
- profits from publishing 562–564
- progresses 287–288, 309, 314–318, 326, 363–365
- prompting 202, 260–261
- propaganda in history plays 375–377
- property laws 107
- props 198, 252, 535–537
- prostitution 81, 128
- Protestantism
 - Bancroft, Richard 23
 - Book of Common Prayer 145, 151
 - Calvinism 144–150
 - Elizabeth I 11–15
 - history plays 375–377
 - immigration 65–68
 - James I 16–17, 19
 - Puritanism 144, 149–150
 - the Reformation 143–153
 - stage devils 37
 - see also* Calvinism; Church of England; Lutheranism; Puritanism
- provenance of artifacts 530–531
- Prynne, William 59, 186, 188, 189, 469–470
- Ptolemaic cosmos 158–159
- publishing 560–575
 - Blount, Edward 567–568
 - Burby, Cuthbert 565–567
 - Cooke, William and Andrew Crooke 572
 - Creede, Thomas 565–567
 - Eld, George 561–562, 570–571
 - female authors 576–597
 - folios 556–557
 - the Folio Syndicate 570–572
 - Marsh, Thomas 564–565
 - Meighen, Richard 572
 - nonprofessional playwrights 562–564
 - Okes, Nicholas 570–571
 - Pavier, Thomas 569–570
 - printers 561
 - printing 552–557
 - risks 562–564
 - stationers 561–562
 - Waterson, Simon 567–568
 - women in print 576–597
- Puddle Wharf 204
- Pulham, George 205
- puppetry 59
- Purchas, Samuel 91
- purging 163
- Puritanism 144, 149–150
 - antitheatricity 183–188
 - church of England 11–12
 - end of touring companies 306–307
 - James I 16–17
 - licensing 234–236
 - popular culture 58–59
- Puttenham, George 36, 49, 57–58
- Pym, John 235
- quadrivium* 158, 167–168
- quality of performance 201–202
- quarto prints 554, 556
- Queen Anne's Men 204, 205, 221, 223, 246, 604 *see also* Worcester's Men
- Queen of Corinth, The* 427
- Queen's Men 206–207, 227, 233, 247, 278–279, 329
 - history plays 374–377
 - repertory 241–242
 - touring 297–299, 302, 304
- Queen's Revels Boys 232
- queerness 443–455
 - definitions 443–444
 - fetish 452
 - gender fluidity 447–448
 - homoeroticism 444–447, 451–453
 - homonormativity 449–450
 - homosexuality 446
 - women 448–451
- Quem quaeritis* 37, 39
- Quintilian 27, 516
- quitclaims 107
- race
 - critical perspectives 474–486
 - Huarte 477–478
 - Marlowe 476, 479–480
 - religion 481–483
 - Shakespeare 475, 477, 480–483
 - social cohesion 478–480
 - transmission 477–478

- Radcliffe, Thomas 240
- “railing” 276–277
- Raleigh, Sir Walter 68, 233, 363
- Rankins, William 185–186, 187–188, 189–190
- Rawlins, Thomas 599, 605–606
- reading of religious texts 151–152
- reality
- domestic tragedy 399–400
 - performance styles 253–254
- “Real Presence” religious dramas 40
- Rebellion, The* 605–606
- Recorde, Robert 167
- Records of Early English Drama (REED) project 38
- Civic London 322–324
 - great households 322–324
 - Inns of Court 322–324
 - materiality 535–537
 - spaces 509–510
 - touring 296–297
 - women 41, 285–286
- recreations
- boy companies 278–279
 - costumes 264
 - Harbage 196
 - original practices movement 256–265
 - original pronunciation 264–265
 - performances in authentic spaces 261–262
- Red Bull (playhouse) 61, 196, 201, 204, 212, 220, 221, 223, 246, 247, 289
- Redford, John 518–519
- Red Lion (playhouse) 203, 212, 398
- REED *see* Records of Early English Drama
- Reformation, the 35–50, 143–153
- Biblical usage 47–48
 - Book of Common Prayer 145
 - Calvinism 144–150
 - Dutch Church Libel 65–68
 - faith by statute 144–147
 - history plays 381–383
 - pagan traditions 58–59
 - secular plays 45–48
 - temperaments 147–150
- rehearsal 202, 250–253, 257–259
- religion
- antitheatricity 183–188
 - Charles I 18–19
 - conversion 143–144
 - disability 492–493
 - divorce 133–134
 - drama 38–45, 325
 - Dutch Church Libel 65–68
 - Elizabeth I 11–16
 - faith by statute 144–147
 - great households 325
 - history plays 380–383
 - James I 16–17, 19
 - mystery plays 36–38
 - persuasions 143–153
 - race 481–483
 - reading habits 151–152
 - the Reformation 143–153
 - remarriage 133–134
 - sermons 147, 151–152
 - skepticism 32–33
 - temperaments 147–150
 - tragicomedies/romances 429
- religious objects 535–537
- Remedy for Seditious, A* 115
- “Renaissance men” 155
- Renegado, The* (Massinger) 427, 428
- repertory 201, 239–249f
- Admiral’s Men 61–62
 - boy companies 273–277
 - choristers 273–275
 - domestic tragedy 390–399
 - history plays of Queen’s Men 374–377
 - touring companies 300–301
 - urban morality plays 345–346
 - see also individual companies*
- reprints 562–564
- retainers of great households 324–327, 329–334
- Return from Parnassus, The, Parts 1 and 2* 520–521, 561, 562
- Returns of Aliens 66
- revenge tragedies 403–416
- catharsis 410
 - choreography 406–409
 - contagion and cure 409–412
 - ghosts 404–406
 - masques 408, 413–414
 - recursive elements 412–415
 - return 404–406
- revisions to texts 550–551
- Rhetoric* (Aristotle) 515
- rhetoric and wit 515–518, 522–523
- Richard II* (Shakespeare) 163–164
- Richard II 230

- Richard III* (Shakespeare) 241, 375, 487–488, 491, 496–497
 Rider, William 608–609
 “riding skimmington” 55, 135–137
 riots 60–61, 67, 75–76
 Ripa, Cesare 309
 roads and touring itineraries 305
Roaring Girl, The (Dekker and Middleton) 383, 448, 507–509
 romances 417–440
 cultural/political aspects 427–429
 English stage works 430–432
 Guy of Warwick 423–424
 “late plays” of Shakespeare 419–421
 performed 422–424, 429
 and tragicomedy 417–419
 Roman comedies 269–270
Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare) 158, 567, 606
 Rose (playhouse) 99, 106–107, 197–199, 215–216, 220, 240, 242
 “rough music” 55, 136
 Rowley, William 53, 91, 178, 332, 381–382, 390, 391, 425, 462, 488, 521 *see also individual plays*
 royal celebrations 312–316, 338–343, 456–458
 Royal College of Physicians 166
 royal concessionary grants 82
 Royal entry, London 339–340
 Royal Exchange 95
 Royal Hospitals 115
 royal progresses 287–288, 309, 314–316, 326, 363–365
 Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) 255, 399
 Rudolph II, Holy Roman Emperor 161
 Russell, Lady Elizabeth 315–316
 Rutter, Joseph 418

 St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre 24
 St. George’s plays 59
 St. James Palace 312
 St. Martin-in-the-Fields 78
 St. Stephens pageant 457–458
 Salisbury Court (playhouse) 223–224, 278
 Salisbury, Earl of *see* Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury
 Samwell, Richard 218
 Sanderson, John 89
Sapientia Solomonis 270
 satire 276–277, 522
 Savage, Jerome 214–215
scenarii 287
Schoole of Abuse, The (Gosson) 187
Schoolmaster, The (Ascham) 21
 school plays 278–279
 schools of acting 202
 science 154–169 *see also* natural philosophy
 scold’s bridles 530
 Scotland
 James VI/James I 11–18
 unification 17–18
 Scot, Reginald 52, 176
 scribes 549
Second Maiden’s Tragedy, The 232
Second Shepherds’ Play, The 325, 404
 secularization of mystery plays 36–38
 secular plays 45–48
 secular rituals in civic drama 341–346
 self–other dynamics 70–71
 semiology 252, 309–310
 Seneca 48, 371, 404–405, 410, 580
 separation 133–134
 Serlio, Sebastian 505–506
 sermons 147, 151–152
Seven Deadly Sins, The 207
 sexuality 443–455
 “chin chucking” 452
 definitions 443–444
 domestic life 128, 131–132
 fetish 452
 gender fluidity 447–448
 hetero-/homobistory 453
 homoeroticism 444–447, 451–453
 homonormativity 449–450
 homosexuality 446
 social transgression 444–447
 women 448–451
 Seymour, Edward, 1st Earl of Hertford 325, 327
 “shadow” economy 288
 Shakespeare’s Globe 255–256, 260–261
 Shakespeare, William
 alchemy 162
 antitheatricality 190–191
 astrology 158–159
 censorship 230
 company of actors 121
 disability 487–488, 491, 496–497
 erotic jealousy 32
 history plays 377, 378–381
 homonormativity 449–450
 “late plays” 419–421
 medicine 163–165

- Shakespeare, William (*cont'd*)
 patron–player interactions 331–332
 playhouses 218–220
 print culture 54
 race 475, 477, 480–483
 revenge tragedies 403, 406, 413–415
 sexuality and gender 446–453
 wit 513, 516, 518, 519, 523–527
 witchcraft 176–178
see also individual works
- Sharpe, Lewis 606–607
- Shepherd's Paradise, The* (Montagu) 469
- Sherley brothers 91
- shipbuilding 77
- Shirley, James 89, 278, 363, 514, 572
- Shoemaker's Holiday, The* (Dekker) 61, 69–71, 383, 533
- Short and Sweet* (Wilson) 207
- Shrove Tuesday riots 61, 183, 197, 223
- Shylock 22–24, 108–109
- Sidney, Mary 577, 579–583
- Sidney, Sir Philip 25, 27–29, 36, 48, 57, 409–410, 422, 425
- Silent Woman, The* (Jonson) *see Epicoene*
- Singer, John 206–207
- single-gendered cast recreations 264
- Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt* (Fletcher and Massinger)
 232–233, 385, 550
- Sir Thomas More* 75–76, 122, 230, 381, 382
- Sir Thomas More and His Family* (Holbein the
 Younger) 126
- Sir Thomas Wyatt* 382
- Six Court Comedies* 54
- Skelton, John 46, 330
- skepticism 32–33
- “skimmington ride” 55, 135–137
- Slater, Martin 221
- slavery, vagrants 113
- Smith, Sir Thomas 83–84
- Smith, Winifred 284
- Sociable Companions, or Female Wits, The* (Cavendish)
 591–592
- social capital 128, 299–300
- social conflict
 classes 75–82, 85
 London and Westminster 75–87
- social inclusion
 court culture 82
 Lord Mayor's show 346–351
 race 478–480
- social inversion 313
- social mobility 82–85, 116
- Soddered Citizen, The* (Clavell) 551, 601, 604
- sodomy 444–446
- Somerset Masque, The* (Campion) 365
- sotie* tradition 46
- Southwark 122
- spaces
 comedies 505–509
 critical approaches 501–512
 digital turn 510
 gender 503–505
 histories 502–505
 in homes 128–129
 position-taking 522–523
 present 509–510
 urban 505–509
- Spanish Armada 13–14, 148–149
- “Spanish Match” 18–19, 150
- Spanish Tragedy, The* (Kyd) 405–406
- Spanish Viceroy, The* 225–226
- Spanish Wars 12–14, 148–149, 225–226
- Spencer, Sir John 83
- Spenser, Edmund 28, 55, 479
- spousals 131–132
- Stafford, Edward, 3rd Duke of Buckingham 298,
 323, 324
- stage devils 37
- stage management 252
- stages
 city spaces 505–509
 civic drama 505–509
 comedies 503–509
 concepts 196
 depth effects 504–577
 feminist perspectives 285
 great households 325–326
 touring companies 302–304
- standard of living 15–16
- Stanley, James, 7th Earl of Derby 299, 305
- Stanley, William, 6th Earl of Derby 245, 299, 304, 305
- stationers as publishers 561–562
- Strange's Men 56, 206, 215, 242–243, 244, 601
- Stuart, Princess Elizabeth 312
- Stubbes, Philip 59, 112–113, 186, 187, 189
- “sturdy beggars” 113–115
- Subsidy Act 15
- subversion of censorship 229–230

- Suckling, Sir John 602
- suicide 581–582
- Sullivan, Mary 284
- Suttill* contra *Suttill* 388–389, 395
- Sutton, Thomas 80
- Swaggering Damsel, The* (Chamberlain) 602
- Swan (playhouse) 197, 203, 216–217, 222, 241, 247, 262, 604
- Tamburlaine the Great, Parts 1 and 2* (Marlowe) 208–209, 479
- Tamer Tamed, The* (Fletcher) 234
- Taming of the Shrew, The* (Shakespeare) 163, 332, 530
- Tarlton, Richard 56–57, 206–207
- taste and commercialization 54–58
- taxation 18, 101
- Technogamia or The Marriages of the Arts* (Holyday) 168
- Tempe Restored* (Townshend) 469
- Tempest, The* (Shakespeare) 33, 89, 91–92, 403, 413–415, 483
- texts
- acting companies 549–552
 - clean copies 549
 - creation 546–549
 - early modern versions 262–264
 - “foul” papers 547–549
 - masques 316–318
 - nonprofessional playwrights 598–611
 - printing 552–557
 - publishers *see* publishing
 - religious 16, 23, 47–48, 145, 151–152
 - revisions 550–551
 - transmission 545–559
 - women in print 576–597
- theaters *see* playhouses
- Theater without Borders research collective 285
- Theatre (playhouse) 61, 106, 184, 213–214, 216, 218–219, 242
- theorizing disability 489–493
- Thirty Years’ War 19–20
- Thomas Lord Cromwell* 382
- Thorndike, A. 421
- Three English Brothers, The* 91
- Throckmorton Plot 12–13
- Thucydides 591
- Tias, Charles 53
- Tillyard, E. M. W. 378–379
- Tilney, Edmund 227, 228
- tirewomen 288
- ’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (Ford) 166
- Titus Andronicus* (Shakespeare) 475–476, 477
- Tom a Lincoln* (anon.) 419
- Topcliffe, Richard 231
- touring 296–308
- company sizes 301–302
 - costs 297–298
 - end of activities 305–307
 - great households 329
 - income 297–300
 - infrastructure 305
 - itineraries 304–305
 - licensing 298–299
 - patronage 298–300
 - performance spaces 302–304
 - power relations 299–300
 - purposes 297–300
 - repertory 300–301
 - women 285–286, 289–291
- Towneley cycle, the 40
- Towne, Thomas 205
- Townshend, Aurelian 469
- trade 88–97
- credit relations 102–103
 - Elizabeth I 15–16
 - global 533–535
 - London 77–78
 - materiality 533–535
 - venture capitalism 93–96
 - see also* commerce
- tragedies
- domestic 388–402
 - Arden of Faversham* 388–390, 392–395, 399
 - definitions 390–392
 - Heywood 397–399
 - performance 399–400
 - repertory 390–399
- revenge 403–416
- catharsis 410
 - choreography 406–409
 - contagion and cure 409–412
 - ghosts 404–406
 - masques 408, 413–414
 - recursive elements 412–415
 - return 404–406
- Senecan 404–405
- see also* tragicomedies

- Tragedy of Mariam, The* (Cary) 462–463, 584–587, 588, 590
- Tragedie of Thierry and Theodoret* (Fletcher, Beaumont, and Massinger) 408
- Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, The* (Marlowe)
- antitheatricity 190
 - clowns 205
 - magic 198
 - materiality 536–537
 - title page 198
 - witchcraft 177
- tragicomedies 417–440
- clowns 205–206
 - continental influences 31–33
 - cultural/political aspects 427–429
 - economy 99
 - English works 433–437
 - “late plays” of Shakespeare 419–421
 - performed 424–429
 - popular culture 57–58
 - and romance 417–419
 - spaces 503–505
 - structure 418–419
- translatio studii* 479–480
- transmission
- acting companies’ texts 549–552
 - licensing 549–551
 - printing 552–557
 - race 477–478
 - texts 545–559
- transvestitism 447–448, 463–470
- travel 88–97
- Travels of the Three English Brothers, The* (Day, Rowley, Wilkins) 91
- Treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes or Enterluds ... are reprovved* (Northbrooke) 184, 187
- trials, witchcraft 171–176
- Triumph of Peace* (Shirley) 363
- trivium* 158, 168
- troth-plight 131–132
- Turks 88, 89, 92–93, 95, 312, 375, 481, 591 *see also*
- Ottoman Empire
- Turner, Robert 400
- Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare) 28–30, 158, 447–451
- Two Gentleman of Verona* (Shakespeare) 449
- Two Lamentable Tragedies* 396, 399–400, 599, 600
- Two Noble Kinsman, The* (Fletcher and Shakespeare) 424–425
- Udall, Nicholas 269–270
- Unfortunate Traveler, The* (Nashe) 21–22, 33
- unhistoricism 452
- unification of England and Scotland 17–18
- university curricula 158
- University Wits 519–521
- urban morality plays 345–346
- urban spaces 505–509
- usury 106
- Utopia* (More) 114
- vagrancy 112–124
- acts of law 112–113
 - crime 114, 116–119
 - “deserving” poor 113, 114–115
 - favorable representations 119–120
 - future developments 122–123
 - historical contexts 113–115
 - as kings 119–120
 - representations 115–120
 - in theaters 120–122
 - touring 298–299
 - women 118
- venture capitalism 93–96
- Venus and Adonis* (Blow) 366
- Venus and Adonis* (Shakespeare) 453
- Vere, Edward de, 17th Earl of Oxford 271, 272, 329
- Vesalius 165
- Villiers, George, 1st Duke of Buckingham 19, 233, 310, 364
- violence 55, 80–82, 104, 135 *see also* riots
- Virgil 49, 55
- Visitatio Sepulchri* 39–40
- vulgarity, popular culture 57–58
- wage deflation 100–101 *see also* inflation
- Wager, William 43–44
- Wakefield Group 41
- Wallace, Charles William 284
- Wallace, Hulda 284
- Walsh, John 171–172
- wardship 132
- Warning for Fair Women, A* (anon.) 395–396, 404–405
- Warwick’s Men 215, 239, 240–241

- watermarks 554
- Waterson, Simon 567–568
- wealth
- actors 204–205
 - wit 520–522, 524
- wealthy households 129
- Webster, John 22, 26, 31, 158 *see also individual works*
- weddings, royal ritual 312
- Westcott, Sebastian 213, 270–271
- Westminster 75–87
- Court of Burgesses 79
 - tensions with London 79–82
- West, Richard 89
- Westward Ho!* (Dekker and Webster) 274
- Wheaton, Elizabeth 289
- wheel of Fortune, *de casibus* 24–25, 31, 46, 392, 564
- When You See Me You Know Me* (Rowley) 381–382
- Whetstone, George 80
- Whitefriars 197, 221–222, 243, 277
- Whore of Babylon, The* (Dekker) 381
- widows 55, 127, 561
- “willing” poor 115
- Willis, R. 298
- Wilson, Robert 206–207
- Wilson, Thomas 183–184
- Winchester College 303, 305
- Windsor Castle choristers 213
- Winter's Tale, The* (Shakespeare) 27, 32, 496
- wit 513–528
- civility 518–519
 - as a commodity 519–522
 - concepts 513–515
 - education 518–521
 - euphuia* 515
 - evolution of 518–522
 - gender 524–525
 - materiality 525–527
 - matter of 522–525
 - money 520–522
 - rhetoric 515–518, 522–523
 - underpinnings 515–518
 - women 524, 591–592
 - in the world 518–522
- Wit and Science* (Redford) 518–519
- witchcraft 52–53, 170–181
- definition in context 170–176
 - demonology 173, 174
 - familiars 174–175
 - family 173–174
 - future research directions 178–179
 - gender 173–174
 - onstage 176–178
 - representations 176–178
 - see also* alchemy
- Witchcraft Act 52, 170–173
- Witch of Edmonton, The* (Rowley, Dekker, and Ford) 53, 178, 390, 397, 425
- Witt, Johannes de 197, 217
- Wit without Money* (Fletcher) 513–514, 521
- Woman Killed with Kindness, A* (Heywood) 129, 398–400, 503–505
- Woman's Prize, The* (Fletcher) 234
- women 282–295
- Cary 577, 583–587
 - Cavendish 577–578, 587–592
 - Chambers 283–284
 - comedy 286–287
 - cultural transmission 286–287
 - Elizabethan culture 52
 - finance activities 288
 - Graves 282–285
 - great households 329–331
 - guild membership 41
 - impersonation 207–209, 447–448
 - licensing 288–289
 - London 77
 - male impersonation 469–470
 - marriage 130–137
 - masque 287–288
 - minstrels 330
 - performance 285–288, 468–469
 - pregnancy 128, 137–138, 459–461
 - in print 576–597
 - “riding skimmington” 55, 135–137
 - scold's bridles 530
 - sexuality 448–451
 - Sidney, Mary 577, 579–583
 - touring 285–286, 289–291
 - vagrancy 118
 - wit 524, 591–592
 - witchcraft 173
 - see also* Elizabeth I
- Woodford, Thomas 221–222, 273

- Woodliffe, Oliver 218
- Worcester's Men 203, 231, 245–246 *see also* Queen
 Anne's Men
- Wright, John 561
- writing
 for popular appeal 60–61
 process 547–549
- wunderkammer* 533
- Wynn, Sir John 78
- xenophobia 68, 72
 antitheatricality 189
 see also immigration
- Yarlington, Robert 599–601
- York cycle, the 40
- Yorkshire Tragedy, A* (Middleton) 396–397
- Young Company 279
- Youths Glory and Deaths Banquet* (Cavendish) 589–590